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SERMONS,

BY

RICHARD WINTER HAMILTON, LL.D., D.D.,

LEEDS.

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SERMONS,

SECOND VOLUME,

BY

RICHARD W. HAMILTON, LL.D., D.D.,

AUTHOR OF

"MISSIONS: THEIR AUTHORITY, SCOPE, AND ENCOURAGEMENT;"
"NUGÆ LITERARIÆ;" &c., &c.

"THE WHOLE WORLD, IN COMPARISON WITH THE CROSS OF CHRIST, IS ONE GRAND IMPERTINENCE."—*Leighton.*

SECOND EDITION.

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MDCCCLXV.

"Profiteor, me sedulo pro modo gratiæ et benignitatis qua Deus erga me usus est, operam dedisse, ut cum in concionibus, tum etiam in scriptis, pure ac caste Verbum ipsius prædicarem, et fideliter sacram ipsius Scripturam interpretarer. Testor etiam ac profiteor, me in contentionibus et disputationibus omnibus, quæ mihi cum hostibus Evangelii habendæ fuerunt, nullis præstigiis, nullis malis artibus et sophisticis, usum esse; sed candide ac sincere in veritate propugnanda versatum esse. Verum, hei mihi! Studium illud meum et zelus (si hoc nomine dignus est) adeo remissus et languidus fuit, ut innumera mihi ad munus meum præclare fungendum defuisse fateor."

Extract from the Will of Calvin.

H. W. WALKER, PRINTER, BRIGGATE, LEEDS.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE REV. HENRY FORSTER BURDER, D.D.,

PASTOR OF THE CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH,

ST. THOMAS' SQUARE, HACKNEY,

AND PROFESSOR EMERITUS OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY IN HIGHBURY COLLEGE.

DEAR AND HONOURED SIR,

BE pleased to accept the Dedication of this Volume. Of the Reverend Tutors, who presided over my Ministerial Education, You alone survive. Upon Simpson and Hooper, long since the grave has closed. They are beyond the reach of any earthly meed. My Veneration and Affection will always cherish their memory and embalm their worth. I cannot, however, but remember that Your Faculty was that which my state of mind and pupilage peculiarly needed, nor have I language to convey my sense of the unwearying patience and masterly clearness with which you constantly exercised it.

In the Retrospect of those Youthful years and Academic scenes, I not only feel my obligations to you equally for personal kindness and official zeal,—as I did

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not then, alas, appreciate them!—but I fear that my desultory habits and wayward dispositions must often have caused you suspense and pain. I present, therefore, these Sermons to you as a token of contrition not less than as an offering of thankfulness.

May your life be greatly prolonged,—your usefulness be constantly multiplied,—and your heart be increasingly comforted, amidst the growth of years, by those holy truths which through life you have so strenuously maintained and so fully exhibited!

Believe me,

In the bonds of devoted Respect and Gratitude,

Yours most faithfully,

RICHARD WINTER HAMILTON.

Leeds, November, 1845.

ADVERTISEMENT.

In consequence of the favour with which the reprint of the First Series of Sermons by the late Rev. R. W. Hamilton, LL.D., D.D., has been received, his Representatives have been induced to issue this volume, comprising the greater portion of the Second Series.

It is their intention to publish a third volume, which will contain the remainder of the Second Series, and probably some miscellaneous Sermons and Papers not hitherto printed.

Leeds, *April*, 1865.

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SERMON I.

THE REVEALED DEITY.

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God is Love.

There is a manner of Divinity in such a saying as this! It prepossesses the mind in favour of its supernal origin. Affirmations of this order belong not to earth. It is not thus that we speak and think. *We* boast, indeed, our aphorisms; and the invention of any important one entitles to the distinction of a preeminent wisdom. We can digest into them very useful knowledge: they become principles of judgment and rules of life. But when we attempt to seize the conception of a God, we can only succeed, and then most imperfectly, by laborious disser-tion. Our reasonings are long and abstruse. Refinement lows refinement, and explanation oppresses explana-n. "The Lord" always might "answer us out of the hirlwind, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words vithout knowledge?" Nothing, therefore, of this kind can we condense. The sentence, the word, cannot be found to characterise Him. Our ideas are feeble, and this is seen in their diffuseness. They have no fulness, no certitude, in them. We cannot pursue them steadily nor pronounce them confidently. And therefore "it is not in man" to explain his ideas in any sort like this. He cannot strike out the single thought and term of such a delineation. "He speaketh of the earth." This

characterization is more than the strength and aptness of human understanding; more than the forms and felicities of human speech. It is the announcement of the Infinite by himself. "He will not keep silence." "That ye may know that I am the Lord." It is the style of a godlike majesty!

And happy is it for us, Dear Christians, if such a statement as this,—the very identification of the Godhead,—fully agrees with our most fixed sentiments and easily coalesces with our most intimate feelings. For it is averse from all that man, left to his mere reason and arguing upon his naked information, ever entertained. Did he fall down before an image of pure and perfect Goodness? Did he ascribe to the great First Cause an absolute Amiableness and Benignity? He knew too little of love himself, to place in it all excellence and to invest with it all ascendancy. It was not to him, so far as he understood it, a thing of greatness. He gave it no veneration. Ambition and aggrandisement had no kindred with it. None of their ends could it subserve. It was too gentle, too humble, too self-sacrificing, for their schemes. Poetry was too proud to sing its modest deeds, and elegy too scornful to record its quiet virtues. Love was banished from the world. How could they, whose heart was enmity against God,—who were living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another,—create a thought and archetype of simple, entire, unmixed Love,—Love essential, Love perennial, arraying it with all the attributes of a supreme self-existence, setting it aloft on the throne of universal dominion, and calling it God? For we know what are the vain imaginations of the human mind when it would describe its notion of the Eternal Power. That notion is invariably one or the other of these. It may be that of *Indifference*. The most intelligent theists of the ancient world and of its classic regions spoke of the calm and ease in which their deities voluptuously reposed, never

interfering in the agitations of human care and strife. Far off they dwelt in an atmosphere through which the earthly tempest could not sail nor the human conflict reverberate. Theirs was the rich, the sweet, the golden, dream. They woke not at the sound of any alarm. They stooped not at the cry of any prayer. They took not heed nor offered help at the occurrence of any crisis. And this is still a common impression concerning the true God. "God hath forgotten; he hideth his face; he will never see it." "Thou wilt not require it." "Who seeth us? and who knoweth us?" "The Lord hath forsaken the earth." "The God of Jacob shall not regard it." "The Lord will not do good, neither will he do evil." Men will justify the view by appeals to the Divine greatness. He is so great that he cannot interest himself in our affairs. Of what kind, then, is this greatness? It is physically gross. Nothing elevated, pure, benevolent, can it include. It is the abandonment of the world to chance or fate. It is carelessness of whatever He has made. It is the contempt of all that divides right and wrong. It is the annulment of law and obligation.—Where Indifference is not the descriptive idea of man concerning the Divine Nature, his is that of *Cruelty*. This is not left in abstraction. It forces itself into palpable shape and expression. Enter the Pagan temple, olden or extant. How merciless, how vindictive, how greedy of victims, how defiled with blood-stains, are the idols of all! These are but the speculations we have formed of the Almighty Being who has made us. Serapis, Baal, Moloch, Astaroth, Jove,—Odin, Frega, Thor,—Sheva, Vishnoo, Juggernaut,—are only so many figures, grim and resentful, hideous and revolting, of opinions and feelings which lie deep in our soul. Our mind hates its own creations, but cannot paint them in any fairer hues.—These are the two governing associations of the human intellect when it would "by searching find out God," and when it would "compare a

likeness unto Him." We trifle with Indifference, or we tremble before Cruelty. These attributions are the offspring of our hope or fear.

But this Christian sabbath has dawned, and this Christian sanctuary has opened, inviting us to other reflections and emotions: representations of a perfectly different nature meet us in these ordinances. There is no lightness, but an awe settles upon our spirit in meditating of Him who is not "far off," who "thinketh upon us" and "careth for us," "with whom we have to do," "God the judge of all." There is no recoiling horror, no "spirit of bondage;" we "draw nigh," "we have confidence toward God." Why is this? Because no Indifference can attach itself to Him "whose we are and whom we serve." He is "with us," is "for us," is "on our side." From all unconcern and from all apathy, if we may thus negatively speak of Him, he is infinitely removed. "He hath set his heart upon us." "The Lord is among us." He is the hearer of prayer. He comforteth all that be cast down. "A Father of the fatherless and a judge of the widows is God in his holy habitation." Why is this? Because no Cruelty can attach itself to Him "whom we worship in spirit and in truth." Tortures are not the rites He asks. He pours his indignance upon the abominations of the heathen who made their children to pass through the fire. Surely as He lives, he has no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live. "The Lord is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy." In opposition to these conjectures of an unconscious Negligence and of a sanguinary Malignity,—*God is Love.* And do you not feel the tender distinctiveness of this designation? It is not an appellative, it is not an epithet, it is not a quality. It is not only His name and his memorial. It is His nature! It is His being! It is Himself! When you entered these portals, no altar rose upon your sight covered with its

slain, reeking with its sacrifice! No form of terror glared upon you from above it! You were overcome by softened and exquisitely grateful feelings; and exclaimed, "How amiable are Thy tabernacles, O Lord of hosts!" You "behold the beauty of the Lord." Whom seek ye? Whom do ye adore? On the light of whose countenance do ye hang and gaze? Love,—boundless, unmingled, Love,—Love filling its own infinitude, inhabiting its own eternity,—Love exulting in its own element, enthroned upon its own height,—Love the only convertible with Deity, for Love is God and God is Love! "Praise ye the Lord. Sing unto the Lord a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints."

And yet it may be that some have heard this blessed enunciation to pervert and abuse it. Their forebodings are relieved. They have construed it into an admission of weakness and indulgence. Their soul is henceforth wrapt in a false peace. They cherish the fond fancy that all is suddenly transformed. They have cast the Eternal King down from his excellency. They have struck the sceptre from His hand. They have thrust Him from his throne. They have repealed His law and overthrown his jurisdiction. They ascribe not righteousness to their Maker. They think not of Him as a God of truth and without iniquity, that just and right is He. They forget the faithful Creator. They cause the Holy One to cease from before them. They imagine to themselves a Being incapable of resisting evil and straitened from punishing the evil doer,—bound to long-suffering and even to connivance,—meaning no retribution when he threatens it,—purposing only to break his every revealed purpose,—practising, though falsely so adjudged, a benevolent deception upon the universe,—not just, not true, not holy, not hating sin, since that He is Love. All such impious consequences must be resolutely disproved.

I. LET US ENDEAVOUR TO FIX THE SENSE AND TRACE THE BEARING OF THIS WONDERFUL AVERMENT.

This assurance may the more need to be simplified from its singular abbreviation. Less thought is not contained because it is presented in such a curt and concise form. The thought may be, for that very reason, more difficult of extrication. It is not so much the self-evident axiom as the long-drawn conclusion, and we must consider it upward through proof and premiss. It stands rather in the relation of a genus to its species, and we must trace the difference and variety of the species to justify and gain the great generic type. It is not that with which we can begin: it is inference, it is result. It requires proof, and is but a consequence of foregoing facts and principles. The man who should take this instance, and reason from it to Christianity, would invert every right position for understanding both it and that religion: the man would speedily understand both, who should reason from Christianity to this instance. It is the summing up, the essence, the perfection, of "the glorious gospel of the blessed God."

And a further occasion for investigating this noble abstract of all revealed truth arises from the predicate into which the Divine character is resolved. In our earlier enquiries, in our more popular usages, it allies itself far most readily with exercises of direct kindness and beneficence. It most naturally suggests to us the thought of individual good and welfare. We are bound, therefore, to redeem it from every misapplication. It may be required of us to show that the ideas of direct kindness and of individual bearing are not its necessary nor its highest indications.

Now as we take a ray of light, perfect in itself, and decompose it into its primitive colours, which primitive colours may again combine to form the pure white light of the perfect ray,—so the love, in which all our ideas of proper Deity converge, may be, for our more complete apprehension, separated and reduced into what is more distinct, and afterwards gathered up and replaced in their glorious integrity. In the theology of our present question

we rise from the particular to the general, from the distinctive to the universal.

Love may be considered to subsist in the Divine nature under the following modifications.

Goodness. This is the disposition to communicate happiness. It displays its earliest effect in creating objects for itself. It calls into sentience all whom it wills to bless. It adapts them to the means of enjoyment provided for them. Man is made upright. He is crowned with glory and honour. His senses bind him to the external scene: his mind is fitted for an inward life. This goodness is universal, but its riches are chiefly lavished upon our race. There can be no other cause of existence, nor fountain of well-being, but God himself. "Who hath first given unto Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?" "There is none good but one, that is God." But we cannot speak of goodness as confined to these ideas. Excellence is presumed: whatever renders Him "fearful in praises." "Doing good," and "sinning not," are the same thing. The "good man" is esteemed for himself, and not only gratefully regarded. A quality is seen in him of worth, and that leads to all his beneficence. His "good works" imply a principle which is morally good. Evil is abhorrent to him. "The good Lord" in the operations of his bounty must, in an equal manner, be contemplated. "He is good and doeth good." "Evil shall not dwell with Him." "His loving-kindness is good." His wisdom and power are beheld ministering to the purposes of his good-will: that good-will is seen in perfect conjunction with his holiness, justice, and truth. He does only what "seemeth him good." In recording that all which He has made is very good, he attests not only the *good* of a general happiness, but the good of a fitness and a desert honourably assimilated to Himself. "He is holy in all his works," and "all his works praise him."

We must not, therefore, conceive of this goodness, though it is too often described in such manner, as a necessary effect, an involuntary excess and overflow, an unconscious spontaneity. The principle of the goodness is essential: its operation is dependent on immediate will. "Whatever the Lord pleased, that did he in heaven, and in the earth, in the seas, and all deep places." Let us think of his creative power as of that which might, or might not, be exercised, and as of the most benevolent design. "Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they exist, and are created." These are the "blessings of goodness."

Complacency. This is the disposition which dwells in the mind of the Former of all things to delight in whatever he has done. His works are great, and reflect back upon him, in proportion to their kind and purpose, all his different perfections. The pleasure which He has connected with the device of wisdom and the sway of power in the breast of his creatures, may, in some unapproachable sense and degree, be not unknown to him amidst his blessedness and for its augmentation. The satisfaction which rises in our spirit upon the accomplishment of any plan or thought most immeasureably above any enjoyment which that plan or thought can of itself suggest, may only be according to a law written on our nature in imitation of a deep original affection of the Infinite Mind. He taketh pleasure, it may be on these grounds, in the productions of his skill and energy. They not only are the transcripts and monuments of His glory, —there was the ineffable secret of triumph in this exercise of his attributes and this embodiment of his designs. The earth stands up before Him! It was in idea ever present to Him, but he has now caused it to burst forth in reality. He exults over its countless capacities for pleasure. It is one vast arrangement for happiness. Chiefly, as the abode of intelligent creatures, does He hail

its subserviency to their highest good. He made it to be an altar of perpetual sweet incense whose odours might breathe to heaven. He constituted it for a palace of joy in which He might dwell among his creatures for ever. The complacency of His mind over it is seen in his unwearying attention. He has not abandoned it whatever may have been its estrangement from its proper use. He would not destroy it. He carries on in it a great remedial and corrective system. He forgets not its final intention. "Of Him, and through him, and to him are all things." And as His purpose of moral government and holy ascendancy is evolved, we learn that he delights not in brute strength and sordid exploit,—"the strength of the horse or the legs of a man,"—"I am the Lord which exerciseth loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

This Love not only includes goodness and complacency but, as it now exists, and is now revealed, it takes the form of "the kindness and *philanthropy* of God our Saviour." * This supposes *certain dispositions of favour towards sinful men.* It is a case, so far as we know, of strict limitation. There has not been, we may presume, any other. We know that there are fallen creatures besides ourselves. For their restoration, we are assured, no means have been, or shall be, provided. Ours is the astonishing exception. It is necessary that these dispositions of favour should be defined.

Forbearance. This is not security from punishment,—it still is imminent and due,—but such delay that, if it be improved, the punishment may be wholly averted.

Grace. This opposes every idea of claim or worth in them to whom it is extended, regarding only their total demerit.

Mercy. This contemplates simply moral obnoxiousness

* Tit. iii. 4. "Οτε δε η χρηστοτης και η φιλανθρωπια." κ. τ. λ.

and liability, or guilt, meeting it with acts which may remove it; as, also, by influences that may subdue the depravity from which that exposure to punishment, or that guilt, could alone arise.

Compassion. This concerns itself with the misery and ruin which sin entails; and furnishes, in the room of these evil consequences, peace, and joy, and hope; everlasting consolation and eternal life.

Now in dwelling upon Divine love in this order of its particular affections and operations, some important doctrines of Scripture must be maintained.

God is Love, contemplated in Trinity. For the expression of this love, the fact of that mystery is made known to us. The Father, the Son, the Spirit, manifest it as distinctly and as unitedly as they subsist and as they relate to each other in those coequal and consubstantial persons. "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us!" "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." "The love of the Spirit." "He that sitteth on the throne." "The Lamb in the midst of the throne." "The seven-fold Spirit before the throne." All we know is this: Such is the Godhead. The Infinite Essence thus declares itself as unity never can be otherwise distinguished, and as distinction can never be otherwise united. And in this awful originality of being and entity there dwells, there inheres, this perfect love.

God is Love, regarded in Covenant. A purpose is revealed as reigning in the Uncreated Mind which supposes engagements and stipulations. The Father seals the Mediator. Jesus is sent. The Holy Ghost is given. There is inauguration into office. There is subordination of trust. The Elohim are the sworn ones. The Head of Christ is God. God is in Christ. He is in the Father and the Father in him. The Comforter is the Spirit of Christ. He sends Him from the Father, even the Spirit

of truth, who proceedeth from the Father. By solemn decree and oath is this covenant confirmed.

God is Love, engaged in special Redeeming Acts. To save the sinner He has not only to will. An immense arrangement must be contrived and established to give that will efficiency. The redemption of the soul is most precious and most difficult. It *can* be saved, but merely because with God all things are possible. *He* only can save it by means absolutely infinite. There must be the predestination of the Father's love, his gift of its objects into the hands of Christ, his laying up of grace in Him for them, before the world began. It is He who justifies and sanctifies in supreme authority, though mediately by other agency. To Him the redeemed church must be presented and the kingdom of the present dispensation be restored. There must be the incarnation and sacrifice of the Son, his meritorious intervention and advocacy, his reign over all things for the protection of those committed to him, and his coming to judge the quick and the dead. He is Surety and therefore Priest, Prophet, King. We are justified by his blood. We are conformed to his image. These are His "sure mercies." He is our peace, our hope, our life. There must, also, be the work of the Spirit on all these hearts. He enlightens, convinces, sanctifies, strengthens, witnesses to our adoption, fills us with unearthly joy, and becomes the first-fruits and the earnest of our heaven. Is not all this, this whole system, its every thought, intention, stage, bearing, issue,—one conduct and pursuance of love?

Though we feel that objection may be alleged against the anticipatory character of these remarks, we justify this character, inasmuch as they were required to be made in some or other stage, and little of rhetorical decorum would be gained by a manner more enigmatical and veiled.

A necessary conception of Divine love is, that it is the love of God primarily to Himself. Self-love in the

creature is not criminal, but is the rule of loving his fellow. If the creature be sinful, then the self-love is sinful. He loves himself better than others. Having ceased to love God with all his mind and strength, which proper self-love would always have dictated, in setting up his will against the Divine law, he is a hater of Him. It is, therefore, announced as the worst feature of evil, that men should be lovers of their own selves. But God can alone love perfectly that which is God. There is no other object deserving of that love. If he loved the creature better than himself he would prefer an inferior attraction. He would love them whom he chargeth with folly more than infinite wisdom,—those who cover their faces before His glory more than that glory. It would be not only a derogation. It would be sin. The standard of all moral greatness would be abased. Another will than the will which is good and perfect would be consulted. Another end than the end which is comprised in not living to ourselves would be introduced. The love which postponed divine excellence and claim to that which was less worthy, must involve whatever was less worthy in proportionate injury. What is congenial, what is lawful, what is susceptible, for God to love fully, justly, save His own nature? For if God is love, we enquire, love of what? Say, of being. He is the fountain of life. Say, of excellence. He is the reason, the glory, the judge, of all virtue. It is by His Self-love that all the activities of his far-beaming and outworking benevolence are informed and ruled.

1. *The original law illustrates this truth by presuming that He is love.*

For if this be "the first and great commandment, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart," then those qualities are to be found in Him which should be thus esteemed. We cannot be compelled to love. Every emotion claims its proper excitement. The hoary moun-

tain and the sylvan glen, the palm and the lily, produce their corresponding impressions. We can only feel awe of greatness, gratitude for favour, confidence in truth. The appropriate counterparts must exist to awaken the kindred sentiments of the soul. Since He is love, our thoughts and passions ought to be reflected on him in love. But His being embraces this quality in an infinite degree. He is "altogether lovely." The correlative affection must consequently be of the utmost intensity, "all our strength and all our mind." But as the Object is religiously presented to us, the reciprocated emotion must be religious. He is to be contemplated in what He is, as well as in what He has done. Our spirits are drawn towards Him,—we delight ourselves in God. Our most intimate yearnings have found their rest and hold. Our heart is fixed. Love is sublimed to reverence; is the strength of faith; gazes through the eye of hope; rejoices; endures; offers itself up in adoration; glows in zeal: sings with the joyful lips of praise. The beauty of the Lord is unfolded in this expression; and our sensibilities are challenged into a corresponding return, the ardours of religion in the reaction of our moral constitution!

2. *All the Divine perfections resolve themselves into love.*

We can easily take the distinction of sacred writ between "the righteous man" and "the good man."* In the former is a stern integrity: in the latter is a tender benevolence. These are not uniform and interchangeable. The integrity does not so much imply the benevolence as the benevolence supposes the integrity. This difference is marked in the dispositions they produce, respect or love,—possibly respect without love, though certainly not love without respect. All these exceptions belong to the limitation of human excellence. At the best it is finite; according to every form of it which we have witnessed, it is always imperfect. But we must apply other rules to

* Rom. v. 7.

our most fitting conception, unworthy as it necessarily is, of infinite perfection. Now we have already perceived that the attribute of human goodness is more comprehensive than that of human righteousness. What, then, is Love in God? To diffuse happiness, He must be happy. What is His holiness but his happiness? What is His justice but the safeguard of his holiness? What is His truth but the assurance of his justice? All these perfections are, then, essential to His Love: in the want of them He could not be love: love, then includes them all. Or the reasoning may be put into another formula. He who is love is worthy to be loved. But *could* you love the being who was not consistent with himself? Could you love him who was not true, pure, just? Do you not loathe the thought of such a being? The more important and elevated his rank, do you not shrink from his image the more? Then these qualities are necessary to complete the idea of love. If God were not faithful, righteous, holy, He could not be love: for that cannot be love which must only provoke whatever is contrary to itself. We, therefore, knowing that God is love because he is most holy, cry to him, "How excellent is Thy loving-kindness!" "How great is His goodness, and how great is his beauty!"

3. *If God be love, He cannot introduce, nor act upon, any opposite principle.*

Were sin left to itself, without check and resistance, that would be encouraged which is most unlike to Divine purity. An implicit sanction would be argued from the forbearance. Whatever is unlike that purity must conduce to misery. Happiness must be impossible in walking contrary to the Source and Author of all happiness. But is it Love to suffer all this evil without any principle or method of prevention? Can it be that from such a Nature no indication of displeasure shall be given? Now what shall be the sign? All the great departments of the material world are fenced round by that kind of control

and preservation which we call law. Those laws cannot be violated without consequent injury, generally falling upon the breaker of them. What, then, shall debar moral transgression? Law can be the only restraint. But what is law which is not enforced? What can enforce law but sanctions? How can sanctions exist if punishment be not ensured against the disobedient? Often it is not by immediate infliction. It is simple consequence. It is natural tendency. It must be so. Nevertheless, it is agreeable to the Divine will. That would have it so. It "causeth every man to find according to his ways." "Their own doings have beset them about." And in all this distributive justice we discern but the proof that He is not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness, that He sets himself against it, that it is the abominable thing which He hates, because destruction and misery are its inevitable fruit, its inalienable entail. He is Love in being the adversary of all that interrupts its exercise and diffusion.

4. *The love of God cannot, therefore, be justly disputed if he leave unremitted the consequences of sin.*

Man, being a free agent, being simply accountable as he is free, can only be kept back from transgression by moral motive, not by outward force. Law is an appeal to him of what is right, and its sanctions equally are appeals to his interests, his hopes, or his fears. This is the rule of Divine government. How benevolent and wise and suitable! The praise becomes the more intelligible and just when an alternative is beyond all supposition! A substituted scheme cannot be conceived. Legislation is the bulwark of earthly communities: how can reasonable creatures be ruled but by considerations of law? Is the only Potentate to be exclusively refused this expedient, and his dominion denied this sway? Could goodness devise a kinder system? We follow it out in its operation. Fearful effects, through the wilfulness of the creature, ensue. These are forewarned. The forewarning was in-

dispensable to the efficiency of the system. If it be forewarning, it must be in serious truth. It shall infallibly take place. The contrary expectation discredits the character of the Lawgiver as much as the purview and providence of his code. His love, if obvious in the threatening, deserves to be admitted as fully by us in the execution. Was He love in the creation of the angels? In proving them? In giving them a law, and, of consequence, a law with all that was necessary to enforce it? But if in retribution of their sin He is no longer love, it follows that there was not love in creating and governing them. Surely then, as every principle of consistency would show that He is not less benevolent now than aforetime, he is still worthy of love, and fallen angels ought to love him beneath their everlasting chains. To argue that, whenever penal consequences arise, they should be directly prevented, is to strike at the system itself. It would be fairer to deny that there should be government at all. The justice and the goodness, the wisdom and the truth, of God are alike assailed. He might not have interposed in our favour and in counteraction of the consequences of our guilt, any more than he did for those earlier rebels. That abandonment would have been just. To carry out a benevolent plan must be as benevolent as the plan itself. Any act of *mercy*, being extra-judicial, being of a different order from the case supposed, cannot enter into our present vindication of Essential Love.

II. LET US NOW ATTEMPT TO REFUTE CERTAIN OBJECTIONS WHICH ARE COMMONLY RAISED AGAINST THE THEME OF THE TEXT.

We believe that God has made every creature to be happy in subordination to his own glory: that what we call *being* is a purpose and an adaptation for happiness: that every being, continuing in its original condition, is happy. We allow no exceptions. We cannot find one imperfectly formed, or denied its share of bliss. Look

through the scale of animated nature. Tender mercies are over all these works. A slight inspection of the anatomy and habitudes of the sloth and the bittern will convince us that they are as happy on the bough or in the pool, as the antelope leaping on its hills and the lark saluting the heavens with its song. Of these inferior creatures the large enjoyment cannot be doubted. They have their wants; but these yield the greater pleasure in the efforts necessary to provide for them, and in their constant gratification. They have, also, their dangers; but these confer value upon life by environing it with precautions, making it a thing of precious interest and guarded trust. Still our discussion is confined to man. And ere we scan his present position, is there not abundant evidence to show and convince us that Infinite Goodness has made a large provision for his felicity? What are his senses, his faculties, his relationships? What are his sorrows to his delights, his disease to his health, his bereavement to his affinity, his pain to his ease, his want to his fulness? It may, however, better uphold our controversy with the ordinary objections against the Love of Deity,—objections drawn from the present state of things,—to premise some of those great principles which directed His creative power and its particular achievements.

1. *God was pleased to create man an intelligent and reasonable being.*

He could have constituted him simply sentient, guided by blind laws of action and of fruition. He might simply have bestowed an animal intellect, just adequate to the direction of animal functions. He has given him "this soul." It is full of perceptive and reflective capacities. It is immortal. Is this excess of bounty to be arraigned?

2. *God could not endow a creature with such mental gifts, without including in them a natural liberty.*

If man have reason, it is its province to distinguish the

nature, order, and uses of things: the character of actions and the truth of propositions. But choice belongs to reason, and its determinations will be influenced by the views of what it supposes good. Freedom is essential to that choice, but motive is as essential to that freedom. Were man bound under any rigid instinct to think and prefer always and only in one way,—his liberty being thus destroyed,—that which we call reason would be simultaneously destroyed. Man sinned,—in his freedom, under the operation of motive,—this is sufficient explanation of the origin of sin: we sin,—in our freedom,—under the operation of motive,—this is sufficient account of its perpetuation. God could have withstood the entrance of moral evil into the universe, if he had not created; or if he had not created those who were capable of committing it. Was He to be forbidden the right of creating the rational and, therefore, the free?

3. *God must, in the event of such a creation, hold the subject of it responsible for the exercise of his liberty.*

Little proof can be required of this statement. It all but proves itself. For were such creature allowed his uncontrolled freedom, it would soon be seen that no other creature could be free. What path of others would not that headlong volition cross? What general interests must it not shock? There would be a world of immitigable strife and variance: a chaos of contending elements. Even now, with all the circumstances of law, "we have turned every one to his own way." Nor would this be all. God himself could be no longer free. His rights would be constantly disputed, and his plans disturbed. He would have originated powers whose interference he constantly must brook. He would live among his creatures to be thwarted, without presidency or redress. This is a moral contradiction and impossibility.

4. *God must, in rendering the creature accountable, promulgate a law.*

We cannot of ourselves anticipate the rule of obedience. Each may exclaim: "I am a stranger upon earth, hide not thy commandment from me." Should it be said that we do not need a revelation of it, that we can interpret nature and consciousness for a precise response to our enquiry, this is merely to say that it is already revealed. From whatever quarter the information may be derived, the fact of the necessity is the same. Still we can only understand how such a law shall be distinct as it is verbally defined. We require to perceive that the law is a vehicle of benevolence and a guide to happiness. Until we appreciate it according to this view, we are "not subject to it, neither indeed can be." But when we combine such distinctions as these,—not proper distinctions in themselves though thus commonly accounted,—when they become in our mind distinctions no longer,—"*Good* and *upright* is the Lord:" "The law is holy and the commandment *holy*, and *just*, and *good*,"—then revere we the authority, we bless the loving-kindness, of our Judge, our Lawgiver, and our King. We know His "*good*, perfect, and acceptable will." We "consent unto the law that it is *good*."

5. *God has so constituted us that we must always feel that we are free.*

Circumstance, so called, is that which we create; it is just so much of opinion and taste as we have been pleased to establish. Passion, higher or lower, is the desire of the mind or the flesh which we follow for the sake of gratification. We may know before that the gratification is foolish and mischievous. Bitter may be our remorse. But in the moment nothing appears to us so good. It is the momentary judgment of what is to be preferred, however that judgment be most false. Man acting from himself,—that is, uncoerced,—obeys his bent and pleasure. It is no proof to the contrary that the inclination of the man is always seen in a certain course. Every created

being is formed according to an order and nature. But though the choice vibrates in such a limit, it is the choice of whatever good or evil that order and nature can allow. It is that being's unfettered will.

6. *God can only treat the individual creature in agreement with the general welfare.*

Infinite Love will be consistent in the promotion of happiness. It will act not by partial, but by general, arrangements; not in contravention of fixed principles, but in accordance with them; not by accommodating and lowering great standards, but by maintaining them. These "commandments are sure. They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness." But were He, whose kingdom ruleth over all, the respecter of persons,—could He unsay his own word, undo his own work,—the moral deterioration of his creatures, that is their wretchedness, must instantly follow. With Him, they must also sink. "For all people will walk every one in the name of his god." There would be no primitive, no model, no conservator, of truth and equity. There would be neither recommendation of right nor fear of wrong. And can any demand be more visionary than for the equality of happiness among all rational and accountable creatures? It would almost seem that the demand supposed that their happiness was some material element finding a uniform level. Is it not remembered that the happiness of such creatures depends upon the cast of their characters and the nature of their dispositions? Can it be imposed on them? Can they be made happy in spite of themselves? A difference must exist as wide as the differences of their moral states. But though the individual may have meted out to him unmixed woe, he bears his own burden: and though his example may be fearfully commemorated, and may be the occasion of good to others, he is in no sense sacrificed to the cause and sum of universal good.

7. *God has intimated to us that our planet-dwelling does not include all his intelligent family, and that his system towards us is very imperfectly developed.*

The system of universal being may present many features in common. And yet from one department we may be utterly disqualified to pronounce on all. Each department belongs to a mighty whole. The stretch and magnificence of the building can little be estimated from a separate chamber or a detached support. We need a more independent view. While we listen to the prologue we may not prejudge the catastrophe. And is it righteous to decide on a conduct very few bearings of which can now be traced? Should not we suspend our comment until the completion of the chronicle? The final issue may redeem all that now is perplexing, and the general result explain all that is now obscure. There are things of our particular œconomy which angels desire to look into. On the winding up of this mysterious history, we may "behold," not only "the goodness and severity of God," but also the very manner in which severity is really another form and agency of goodness.

8. *God may not be blamed for the consequences which he has forewarned, which are wilfully incurred, and which he has given his creatures the fullest liberty, and urged them by the strongest remonstrance, to avoid.*

It is not to be brought as a charge against the Divine care and government of all things, that disorder and woe prevail. "Why boastest thou in mischief, O mighty man? The goodness of God," in perfect contrast, "endureth continually." He testifies against our infatuation. "What is this that thou hast done?" "O that my people had hearkened unto Me!" "I will do you no hurt." "Is God unrighteous that taketh vengeance?" Annihilate sin and you annihilate suffering. There shall be no more death. The ground shall not yield another brier, the earth shall not heave another groan, the man shall not know

another toil, the mother shall not suffer another pang, the babe shall not shed another tear.

So would we select these broad and satisfactory conclusions; and when that which is extreme and ultimate in future retribution is pressed against the love of God, we may rest in them. There are a thousand ills which we would readily avert. But are we then more benevolent than God who permits them? It is not improbable that our feelings would often suggest an alternative. "God forbid." "That be far from Thee, Lord." Are not these weaknesses, prejudices, to be corrected? and, whatever is their imaginary amiableness, are they not tainted with impure alloys? Nothing can be amiable which would determine contrariwise to the God who is love. Oh what sin is there in every thought and wish which most secretly sets itself above His benevolence! Angels! transcendently more pitiful and tender than ourselves, Ye are true in your every feeling to Him whose "glory passes before" you in an infinitely attractive "goodness," —ye can loyally execute the tasks of punishing all who rebel against Him,—ye falter not in your halleluia when the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever!

III. Let us now exhibit the monuments and demonstrations of this love.

Nor for a moment will we pause until we record that which surpasses every other: that which is so marvellously strange and rich that it stands out diverse from all: for which nothing of the most admirable goodness could prepare us: which is as of another kind and temperament: which becomes the root and cause of whatever else is love: like the doing of another Being, like the manifestation of another Nature, but only because this was the solitary opportunity without precedent or sequel, only because such an interposition must be a single and unexpected deed. God hath given the Son! The Son

hath given himself! Thus may it only be rehearsed: "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus; that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace, in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

We now touch the verge, we can do no more, of the mystery of godliness. Wonder rises upon wonder! Deep calleth unto deep! Wonders are in those deeps! "God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him, should not perish but have everlasting life." Who can speak this triple emphasis? "God *so* loved!" that he "loved the *world*,"—"so loved!" "that he gave his *only-begotten* Son,"—"so loved!" that *whosoever* believeth should not perish but have everlasting life." And was it simple gift, like a fiat of power, like a prodigality of munificence? "He *spared not* his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." What dread shadowings are here! What broken words! What do they mean? When did ever sinful creature sink hopeless beneath His frown, but his heart was turned within him, but his repentings were kindled together, but his voice was heard, "How shall I give thee up? How shall I deliver thee?" No such relenting is now expressed. There is no withholding that even His own Son should be spared. "He is delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God to be crucified and slain." "He is delivered for our offences." To spare "as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," is the figure which the Almighty Father has designed to employ concerning ourselves. But this is his proper Son: begotten, not made: his dear Son: the Son of the Father in truth and love. "Spared him not!" It is strait and struggle! The bosom of the Father in which was the only-begotten

Son, seems to heave as we listen! The eye of the Lord which is upon them that fear him, to deliver their soul from death, hides itself from this scene! It was in some manner, inexplicable to finite minds, a cost, a surrender, a submission to a new necessity, a necessity to be deprecated in itself. The "prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears" of "the Son learning obedience by the things which he suffered," moved Him who "was able to save him from death," and were "heard in that he feared." When he exclaimed, "Now is my soul troubled," there "came a voice from heaven." All shows the sympathy with the Sufferer, but what can be the sympathy of that which is Divine? Ineffable mystery! I bow down in the feebleness of my reason. "When I think to know this, it is too painful for me." But the Love stands without a doubt confessed. It is as though it never before was published: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only-begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him." It is as though it never before invited attention: "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." It is as though it never before had existed: "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Now He, who laid down his life for us, has appeared. Of old He had rejoiced in the habitable parts of the earth: from everlasting his delights were with the sons of men. God was manifest in the flesh. And what would have been our anticipation of Him? Told that He is the image of the invisible God, we prepare ourselves to see embodied love. He shall identify and absorb it. He shall reduce it to intelligence and sense. He shall bring it near and make it palpable. We shall see him with our eyes, and our hands shall handle him. Had it been left us to conjecture what that impersonation of love should

be! There might have risen up before our mind a sacred, tender, Form, bending the heavens, outshining the stars, so august as to fill our souls with admiration, so strange as to smite them with awe. The love would want definiteness still. We should essay to master our conception in vain. But in Immanuel, love shades all the glory and softens all the magnificence until it is attempered into an unutterable sweetness, an infinite grace,—yet perfectly human, human in its habit of indulgence and manner of exercise, human in its circumstances and conditions, human in its signs and features, warming the human heart, suffusing the human countenance, to be heard in the human sigh, to be marked in the human tear! Yet is He the Holy One, and the Just. We know why we may call Him good. The incarnation represents to us that God is love,—causing the essential and the spiritual to take shape and act, which may address our humblest sense and move our simplest feeling!

But the love of Christ passeth knowledge. It proves itself in the mighty deed which was the end and motive of his incarnation. He came to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. He loved us and gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice unto God. This atoning death is the climax of infinite love. "Hereby perceive we love, the love," what love can do, what the love which we now review has done, "because He laid down his life for us."* It is the crisis, the exhaustion, the triumph, of love; love to death, love stronger than death. But that love at Calvary not only culminates in its meridian and burns in its noon, it seems greater in the qualities of moral excellence than those by which hitherto it was known. See the penitent, the convert, the worshipper, as they bow around the Cross! It is the Love of God which is the power that binds them. But how awful is this love in their esteem! They trifle not with it. They presume not

* 1 John iii. 16.

upon it. They "give thanks at the remembrance of His holiness," they "declare his righteous acts," as well as "glorify him for his mercy." Draw near and read those interwoven inscriptions! "He delighteth in mercy," "the righteous Lord loveth righteousness." "God is love," "God is light." Every wondering exclamation is rising there! "Who is a strong Lord like unto Thee?" "Who is like unto Thee, O Lord, glorious in holiness?" "Who is a God like unto Thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by transgression?"

The Love of God in the gift, the humanity, and the sacrifice, of Jesus Christ, stands not apart from efficient results. There is no scheme of good but it avails to uphold and operates to secure.

Contemplate the system of Universal Providence. What very equal happiness, so far as it depends on external circumstances apart from moral tastes, is generally distributed! What an amazing check is put upon evil, and who can calculate that "remainder of wrath" which is "restrained!" What gratifications meet us at every turn! We deny not the admixture of suffering. We sing not only of mercy but of judgment. But it might be one ban and condemnation. It might have been one overflowing scourge. Is the Lord exclusively known by the judgment which he executeth? He is good to all. His sun ariseth on the evil and the good. He is kind to the unthankful. His rain descends upon the just and the unjust. In His hand our breath is, and his are all our ways. He giveth us all things richly to enjoy. In Him we live and move and have our being. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill. He is not far from every one of us. He giveth food to the hungry. The Lord looseth the prisoners. The Lord preserveth the strangers. He bringeth up our life from the grave. He telleth our wanderings. The hairs of our head are all numbered.

"Many such things are with him." This kind and watchful superintendence of our race is the procedure of the great Mediatorial principle which the Divine love has introduced and which it wills to honour. This is the reason why the sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, and in respect of this is the sinner's respite. A channel is open in which flow terrestrial streams of no mean joy. There is a fatherhood which the prodigal may yet recall and yet invoke. Vestiges of a fairer state reappear. The flowers of Eden grow wild among us still. Destruction is held back. Desolation is stayed. The earth is not given into the hands of the wicked. Christ is head over all things, and though to the church, what advantage do "all things" derive from that headship! The Father hath given Him power over all flesh, and though it is to give eternal life to as many as are given to him, what benefits do "all flesh" acquire from that investiture!

For it is a part of the doctrine of salvation, that it is offered for "all acceptation:" that all are commanded to receive it; that it is adequate for all. This is the testimony of God to man. It opens a new probation to him. It leaves him accountable to make this grace his own. While he is addressed as sinner and rebel, it is to seek and to save that which is lost. Is all thought withdrawn from him? Is he not precious and earnestly desired? "Is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure?" Can we exceed the witness of God? "Who will have all men to be saved and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." "Who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe." "The Lord is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance." Christ is therefore exhibited as "the propitiation for the sins of the whole world." That sacrifice has an infinite sufficiency for all. It has a moral aspect on all. It is an unconditional tender to all. If the sinner perish, it is because he rejects

it. To assert that the God who is love is equally pleased with the perdition and the salvation of the sinner,—that each issue is alike agreeable to his will, or that his will in either instance is to be understood in the same sense,—is repugnant to all that he has revealed of himself. "Have I any *pleasure at all* that the wicked should die? and not that he should return from his ways and live?" He is slow to wrath. Vengeance is his strange work. Is his mercy ever thus described as slow, or its exercise as strange? We are bound thus to consider the Infinite Jehovah from his own most solemn adjurations, by the distinctions which he has himself raised, by the solicitude of heavenly spirits for the sinner's repentance, by the working of evangelic motives leading us to make intercessions for all men, by the exultant strain of prophecy over the vision of a ransomed world. Perverse is every disputing of this. The angel flies through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people. He is on his way! He pursues his track! Is his a too dilated benevolence? Has he stretched too bold a plume? Does he wing too far a flight? Does he make proclamation in too indiscriminate a manner?

Nevertheless this Love has always secured for itself grateful recipients and holy subjects. "The Lord knoweth them that are his." By his loving-kindness He has drawn them. The love of God is shed abroad in their hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given unto them. They are a peculiar people. "They shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in the day when I make up my jewels." He delights in them. He rests in his love towards them. He rejoices over them even with joy and singing. All things are theirs. All things are for their sakes. All things work together for their good. So stable is this love, that they may cast all their burdens upon it: so

sympathising is this love, that he who is soothed by it is as one whom his mother comforteth: so does this love identify itself with its objects that, "Thus saith the Lord, he that toucheth them toucheth the apple of his eye." The mountains may depart and the hills be removed, but his loving-kindness shall not depart. And did the Christian stand on the loftiest of those mountains and the firmest of those hills, still might he exclaim while they sunk and crumbled beneath his feet, "I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

And this love assimilates. We are changed into the same image. God is not only love, but "love is of God." "He that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God and God in him." This is the immediate reflex influence. "We love Him, because He first loved us." The love of God seems oftentimes in Scripture to possess this double meaning: the love of which he is the object and the source. The same blending is frequently found in our hearts. It is his love, it is our love, and these inseparably unite. So the fire of the altar and the fire from heaven could not of old be distinguished, the same altar sustained the whole burnt-offering, and the flames arose together in a commingled blaze.

It is, too, in this manner that we learn to be followers of God. He is good, always good. Let us honour all men. Let us do good unto all men. Let us eschew evil and do good. Let us love all, as God loves all, in pity. But His is a special love. He is only complacent in what resembles himself. He will only have a desire for the work of his hands. He does good to them that be good. The love of the brethren, is the test of our kindred with them. "If God so loved us, we ought

also to love one another." "Every one that loveth Him that begat, loveth him also that is begotten of him." If we would speak of the love of God as an attribute, we could not say, that He is Love. One attribute no more identifies him than another. He leans to none. He is distinguished by none. But Love is as the Crown out of which they all, like costly gems, emit their varied though equal lustre: or as the Firmament where they shine as a glorious and constellated host. In this wise, Love becomes the brightest virtue of the Christian, it is so comprehensive, so impellent, so adorning, the groundwork and the perfection of all: "Now abideth faith, hope, love,—but the greatest of these is love."

Oh that this Breviate were but known! This single word which explains that awful Self-existence who rideth upon the heavens by his name, Jah! It is registered on every tablet of Creation! It is echoed from every dispensation of Providence! It is the motto of Christianity! "Every man may see it, man may behold it afar off." Were it but felt by all! Another murmur could not rise. Another heart could not rebel. Variance would cease in a moment throughout the universe. All things would be gathered together in one. Believe it, believe it, ye who hate God, and ye will yield. Herald it, herald it, ye who have tasted that the Lord is gracious, that all may hear and feel it too. May this joyful sound be caught up by every wind! May this infinite pathos light on every spirit! May this bond of perfectness unite God and his creatures for ever.

SERMON II.

THE HOLY HABITATION OF HEAVEN.

John xiv. 2.

In my Father's House are many Mansions.

The style of the Inspired Volume is singularly inartificial. Nature, fixed and simple, is the silent and perennial source from which its images and illustrations are derived. Even these are selected very cautiously, if not sparingly; and are used with a measured chasteness and an unambitious effect. The authority of Revelation is made to rest upon what it is, and what it discloses: manner it regards as most purely subsidiary and comparatively unimportant. It is, indeed, a storehouse of all that is sublime in thought, and magnificent in expression: this, notwithstanding, is never its care and study, but something incidental, unavoidable,—the escape of irrepressible brightness, the overflow of redundant fulness,—and then, after all, this involuntary excess and intensity is shaded and subdued.

But in the descriptions which the Bible unfolds of the heavenly state, it departs from its accustomed rule. Now it no longer maintains its jealousy of ornament, nor checks its hand. All from this time is scattered with a rich and lavish profusion. The gorgeous in art is added to the simplicity of nature: each scene of elaborate life is copied, and metaphor is amassed upon metaphor. It exhausts the resources of power and wealth, and lays the

realms of imagination under its subserving control. Yet is it with unconscious loss and labour that it casts down its spoils,—the heap of opulence, the weight of glory. It ranges the universe of God and man unwearied, and returns with treasures and splendours from both. The spirits of the prophets seem no more subject to the prophets. Theirs is an irresistible rapture. Whether in the body or out of the body, they cannot tell.

Sometimes that celestial region is represented as Paradise. One was lost, but in this it is far more than actually restored. The forfeiture and the desolation are infinitely retrieved. The withered flower blows again. The scathed plant revives. The wasted fountain wells with its ancient gush. The sered arbour is dressed in its pristine verdure. The air is redolent of fragrance, the garden mantles with bloom and teems with fertility. That holiness surpasses innocence. That calm exceeds all that the stainless conscience felt. Angels are more familiarly known than when they sung to unfallen man. The Lord God walketh in it with endearing condescensions, such as could not be exercised of old. We may freely eat of every tree. We shall be as gods. In the midst of it towers the mystic stem of an immortal life. We may put forth our hand and take of that incorruptible fruit and live for ever. Nothing can blight the scene. No evil can contaminate it. No tempter can invade it. It fadeth not away. It is no province of earth. Her rivers do not water it. Her odours do not refresh it. Her garlands do not embower it. New heavens bend over it. A new earth lends it grace and beauty. In those heavens, in that earth, there is undecaying purity, therein "dwelleth righteousness," as native to them and their richest glory.

Sometimes it is exhibited as a City. It is holy and royal. It is no mean city. It is the Divine residence. It is the city of the great King. Its architecture seems built up of massive light. It is not wrought of "things

which do appear," like the rudiments of earth. It is a continuing city. It is crowded with the nations of the saved. All high and holy natures have their citizenship in it. They who shall go no more out are set as pillars there to illustrate it, columns living and commemorative, on which its name is imperishably inscribed. Its portals shall not be shut at all. What sounds float over it! What irradiations dart from it! It keeps its feasts. It celebrates its annals. Its walls are jasper, its gates are pearl, its foundations are crystal, its streets are gold. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God!

At other times it is set forth as a Kingdom. Its epochs, its chronicles, its monuments, its trophies, its riches, are worthy of its fame. Crowns and thrones, robes of victory and palms of triumph, are among its common things. The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it: they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations into it: that is, all kingly pomp and all national greatness furnish emblems of it, but only to be lost in its transcendence. A new song wafts its praise. Unlike the empires of the earth, it is fixed and everlasting. The throne of God and of the Lamb is in it. Sin and death have there no place. Every subject there is himself a king. We shall reign in life. We shall reign for ever and ever.

But if in Heaven shall be found all that endears the human home, that stronghold of our affections, that refuge from our cares, can idea reach a nobler complexion, or feeling acquire a purer tenderness? If we can aspire to it and, in sacred phrase, "sore long after" it, as our home, will it not more truly and bindingly attract than a Paradise with its sweets, a City with its immunities, a Kingdom with its grandeurs? Who has not known the heart of a stranger? Who has not felt it contract, and shut, and droop? Who has not known it to expand at sounds of kindness and amidst scenes of affection? Who

has not felt the cheering spectacle of familiar faces and the animating music of familiar voices,—the home which goes with us,—the home which exists though we forsake every favoured, chosen, haunt,—kindred, the fellowship of blood, the intercommunion of mind, the indissolubleness of bond, undying connection, deathless confidence, heaven-pointing love? It is our tent, however frequently we strike it: it is our "company," whether we "lodge in it," or whether it be "sent over" while we are "left alone." The banishment from Eden divided not the guilty pair, nor forbade their broken hearts to blend their sudden woes. The mother of the crucified Jesus, grief-absorbed beneath that awful tragedy, has gained half her relief, and recovered all her composure, when the beloved disciple, the foster-son, is seen leading her to his own home. Blessed is the habitation of the just! Beautiful are the tabernacles of the righteous! Patriotism cannot exist without its homestead! Religion dies without its altar-hearth! What survives the ruins of our fall, but this one shelter? What is left of all the trees which shaded and delighted our yet unsinning nature, but the vine by the sides of our house and the olive-plants round about our table?

Look, then, Dear Christians, this day to your Father's house. For therein are the many mansions, the happy resting-places, the safe retreats, where you shall for ever dwell!

But it is more. For the allusion, not improbably, is to the Hebrew Temple, which the Saviour had elsewhere denominated his Father's house. "Make not my Father's house a place of merchandise." In the Old Testament writings this phrase is of common recurrence: "My house." That house was "called by His name." It was foretold by prophecy concerning Messiah, that he "should be for a glorious throne to his Father's house." The temple contained numerous apartments for the courses

of the priests and for the preparations of the worshippers. There were the chambers of the singers, and of the keepers of the charge of the house, and of the keepers of the charge of the altar. "There was an enlarging, and a winding about still upward to the side chambers: for the winding about of the house went still upward round about the house: therefore the breadth of the house was still upward, and so increased from the lowest chamber to the highest by the midst."* And in our Father's house are many mansions, the proper stations agreeing to the capacities and duties of all who are received into it. Endless is the celestial service, and each from his place beholds and adores the Majesty in the heavens. Thus the charm of the domestic precinct and the awfulness of the holy place are combined. It is a Household Sanctuary! It is a Temple Home!

I. LET US, THEN, ENDEAVOUR TO CONCEIVE OF HEAVEN AS THE HOUSE OF OUR FATHER, UNITING IN IT ALL THE ASSOCIATIONS OF FILIAL HAPPINESS AND REVERENT DEVOTION.

Now the very relationship of family is supposed by the scheme of our redemption. Sin is alienating. It makes us "strangers and foreigners." We sink from our rank and from the likeness of a holy nature into children of disobedience and children of wrath. "Our iniquities have separated between us and our God, and our sins have hid his face from us." There is a Mediator. We are made nigh by the blood of Christ. We are gathered together in one. We are reconciled to the reconciling God. We draw near. We have boldness and access with confidence. We enter into the holiest. It is of the nature of justification to bestow favour and acceptance, and to inspire the assurance of these superadditions to a mere pardon. It is of the essence of regeneration to awaken love and delight in the contemplation

* Ezek. xli. 7.

of the infinite excellence and goodness. Our consequent fellowship is with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. And the working out of this justified condition and this regenerate nature is, Adoption. It may, indeed, be considered an advancement upon them : a more defined type and beatification. Still it is most properly their exponent and security. A childlike title and a childlike temper are the results : " Now are we the sons of God." It is not only legal, federal, and moral, oneness : we " have power to become " these " sons." " Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God ! " Christ " is not ashamed to call us brethren." " The Spirit is sent forth into our hearts, crying Abba, Father." This is " the whole family of heaven and earth." Heaven is, therefore, an inheritance. We stand in affinity to its bliss. " We are heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ." " Many sons are brought unto glory : " here is their discipline and nonage, yonder is their maturity and consummation. Home is the abode of children : their rights are acknowledged and their approaches are greeted under its shade : piety is learnt, the charities are cultivated, within its bound. Touching are the thoughts of home : what is the home of heaven ?

Quiet and *Repose* are connected with its sound. We are wanderers on earth. Without are fightings, within are fears. We are strangers and pilgrims. All are pilgrims hastening, however reluctantly, to an eternal world. For some are satisfied with this. They have their portion in this life. Christians are strangers as well as pilgrims, the present is not congenial to them, they are despised and harassed, while their pilgrimage is still pursued. Willingly they throw the earth behind them and lay hold of heaven. For this they endure, they watch, they strive : their minds are often perplexed and their footsteps weary. " Walking through this great wilder-

ness," they are subject to cruel treachery, to bitter trouble, to vexatious disappointment. Early this course, it may be, begun. Lingering has been its progress. They still lean upon their staff. But soon shall they toil no more. The days of their mourning shall be ended. They shall come to their Father's house in peace.

Confidence is the sentiment which is most natural to every thought of this endeared lot. Look at the home-born child. It clings to the domicile and seems to grow to it. It questions not its fullest title to appropriate its possession. It goes in and out. There is no such familiar remembrance, no such beloved resort. There it was cradled, there its first step tottered, nor dreams it that ever it must turn away from that door. When danger threatens, this is the bulwark: when affliction weeps, this is the asylum. What sorrows and what cares fly for succour and relief to this hiding-place! In its truth and its fidelity, what an example of worth and what a support of reliance contrast themselves to the deceptions around! It is this assuredness which is the secret of all earthly satisfaction and peace. Yet is it not always to be cherished, it may not be invariably justified, where we have fixed our most steadfast trust and expended our most devoted love. Then suspicion coils like a serpent about each flower of existence; or, like a lurking poison, taints all its springs. But with what strictest security does all the happiness of heaven rise on our view! Nothing maketh a lie. Thieves do not break through and steal. There is no more death. With what cheerful certitude may we realise that home, tread its halls and mansions as native to them, not entering it with affright nor abiding in it by constraint, not bewildered by its newness nor dazzled by its glory,—never to be confounded,—resting from all our enemies,—perfect guilelessness and benevolence in all the dwellers of the same celestial abode! "In returning and rest shall ye be

saved; in quietness and confidence shall be your strength."

Concord is the divine element of the domestic constitution, for "He is the God that maketh men to be of one mind in a house." It is the haven defended from the wild surges of the ocean: it is the covert from the storm. Nevertheless a house may be divided against itself. There may be strife of opinion, disagreement of character, envy with its baleful glance, anger with its furious sally, revenge with its moody dint. There may grow up the root of bitterness, and there may be cast the stumbling-block of offence. But the inhabitants of that House towards which we journey are "made perfect in one." They have one heart. They see eye to eye. With the voice together do they sing. An infinite love binds and harmonises all. If we too much forget to ask each other while here below, "Have we not all one Father?"—the remembrance of that truth will ever be vivid and efficacious in our "Father's house."

Sympathy is the most powerful attraction and bond of these "pleasant places." The social range is here compressed, and all its ties become the stronger and gentler in proportion to its narrower limit. The interchange of kind offices and good feelings is its virtue and its life. The delicate surprise of thoughtful attention and interest, the look, the accent, the token, diffuse a charm around the household which a more costly expression, if not ministered with the same air and manner, would fail to impart. But sympathy has often to exercise other tasks beside those of joy. It rises into commiseration. We weep with them who weep. Pain must be soothed. Bereavement must be healed. We bear the infirmities of the weak. Where, then, can this "brotherly-kindness" find a scene for its perfect expansion and fruition, but in our Father's house? There shall be no more sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. There will

be nothing to endure, nothing to estrange, nothing to forgive. Sentiment will be reciprocated as by a perfect reflection, recognition will be intuitive as twin-love, and holy fellowship will vibrate as to a common sensory and throb as to a common heart. How intermingled, united, are all those throngs! How symphonious are the strains of the "thousands of thousands" while we "hear" them "saying" the same ascriptions! How simultaneous, even as in choral measure, is the "walking" of "the nations of the saved!" All is agreement and response.

Improvement is the law of the house where holy example and instruction present themselves. This is the true sphere of education. Counsel flowing in parental tone, beaming from parental feature, ministered beside parental knee, pourtrayed by parental model, what may it not accomplish? The child finds knowledge meeting it at every point and through every sense. Discipline like an atmosphere, as inspiring and almost as undetected, invests its course. An involuntary resemblance to that which is good and high is superinduced. It is "the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Heaven is full of light and purity. During our mortal state, however matured our powers and enlarged our attainments, we speak as a child, we understand as a child, we think as a child. It is there that we "shall put away childish things." In that light we shall see light. Amidst its array we shall wear the righteousness of the saints. What shall be its solemn, sweet, companionship! What shall be its shining patterns! What shall be its glorious disclosures! O place and opportunity for the culture of the immortal mind,—for the formation of habits, for the growth of principles, for the training of sensibilities, akin to its destiny!

Content and *Happiness*, if found on earth, are to be sought alone in this peaceful enclosure. This lamp would be in every dwelling, but for evil principle or

external adversity. It is sin which brings down the curse. A home may be a more compact mass of iniquity: a more condensed nuclus of woe. "Surely such are the dwellings of the wicked, and this is the place of him who knoweth not God. There are other ills which invade even the habitation of the just: poverty and disease, heart-breaking loss and desolating death. Our fathers! where are they? Our children! Their beauty consumes in the grave from their dwelling. Is there no unholy branch? David's house is not so with God. Is there no sudden separation? "Lazarus is dead." How our families decay around us! They are "minished and brought low." The roof-tree falls! There is a longer home to which we go! Yet this is the only spot where content may smile and happiness rally. The soul dwells at ease. The heart finds rest. The plague does not come nigh. The voice of joy and salvation resounds. Peace sheds its balm. Love unfolds its wing. Hope bends its rainbow. What, then, is our Father's house? Even now we make the Most High our habitation,—He is for a house of defence to save us,—the Lord God dwells among us,—He walks in us,—He has been our dwelling-place in all generations,—but ah, nothing of the dearest human love, nothing of the most ecstatic piety, nothing of the most sainted communion, can represent what it is to be "at home* with the Lord?" "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens."

But it is not only our Father's house in the associations of a home, it is the consecrated receptacle of His worship. And these ideas are not incompatible, but of easiest concurrence. For, to the Christian's perception and taste, what can make Heaven more delightful, in addition to its illustration as a home, than that this home shall be

* 2 Cor. v. 8. "ἐνδημῆσαι πρὸς τον Κύριον."

devoted, with the family which fills it, to the high praises of our Father in heaven? He even now inhabits the praises of his people. They who dwell in his earthly house are still praising him. Is this appropriation unworthy of His celestial palace? Yet all is softened to the conception of a home. It is indeed a Temple, august and awful. The ark of the testament is laid up there. The tabernacle of the testimony is opened. Altar and censer are seen. Angels blow their trumpets. Harpers harp with their harps. The heavenly things themselves are so holy that they needed to be purified by the blood of the Great Sacrifice ere fallen creatures, though sanctified wholly, could stand in contact with them. It is a manifestation of the Infinite Presence, until it becomes so full, so clear, so unconfined, that space with all its mightiest dimensions melts away, that material proportions are lost, "for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." This is beautiful, most beautiful! The votary is the child! The child is the votary! He is not "afraid with any amazement." In trepidation he does not "make haste." Pilgrim never touched more reverently the dreadful shrine: son never more joyously beheld the paternal eaves or bounded upon the paternal threshold. With this double intention, of resting in a home and of ministering in a sanctuary, he exclaims: "I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." The entrance has been given. Low bows his head, but it is to a Father! In that place the divine name is set, but it is the name of a Father! It is a house for the Lord Almighty, but he will be a Father unto us, and it is therefore our Father's house! Faithful to the adoption of children, he commands, "Bring my sons from far, and my daughters from the ends of the earth:" and his sons and daughters gather themselves together to his bidding, they come to Him! The concourse swells! From the four winds of heaven they congregate in their fulness! "Multitudes, multitudes!"

They enter in! And now are closed upon them the sacred leaves, the domestic doorstead! The gates of Zion eternally fold in the dwellings of Jacob! The stranger is not in those gates! They are the children of the free! They are the *children of Zion!* Yet is it the glorious liberty of the children of God! They are priests unto God, and serve him day and night in his temple! Yet are they the children of God, being the children of the resurrection! It is the Church in the House!

II. We must remember that in this house of home and temple there are many mansions.

And thus are we taught that the greatest amplitude consists with the strictest unity, that though the mansions are numerous the house is one. Stars, wide distant from each other, furnished not to separated companies their deep recesses, their pavilions of gold; but "the general assembly" is convened in its entireness and unrestrained intermixture. It is the same habitation. And thus, also, we learn that there is no monotony in that blessed state, no dull level; that the multitude of the redeemed do not appear in an indistinguishable, undelineated, semblance; but that, as in the angelic hierarchy there are marshalled ranks,—thrones, dominions, principalities, powers,—so on different elevations shall stand the saints, varied their song and descriptive their duty! There is order in the harmony of difference, and the distribution of the mansions completes the identity of the House.

Meditating, then, on this multiform glory, on this untold gradation of the abodes which are prepared for the "saints in light," we may propound the following scheme of reflections and inferences.

What do we ascertain of those blessed immortals?

1. *The Immensity of their Number.*

Heaven once suffered a vast and instantaneous depopulation. Spirits to whom it was the birth-place, who had known no inferior stage of being, created in purity and

crowned with glory, of mighty power and intelligence, covered themselves with the guilt and shame of a most unnatural revolt. What a home was theirs! One element of blessedness filled it! Festal was their song and jubilant was their triumph! It was their own habitation, —they left it. It was a chief position, the highest rank,* a principality,—they did not keep it. They fought but prevailed not, neither was their place found any more in heaven. They sinned, and without pause or hope they were cast down into hell. This is what the Scripture tells us, and it is all we know. The influence of the catastrophe we cannot determine. We know not the silence into which those abodes were hushed. We know not what are the griefs of loyal essences, like those who withstood temptation; what was the sense of sorrow and solitude which would affect them. The nature of the fact being determined, we may justly suppose that the corresponding emotions would follow. It was a sad and appalling change. Was it not then truly regarded? We may therefore conclude that they were saddened and appalled. Creatures, long their fellows, until then familiar to the heavenly places, no more brightened on their eye. Blest voices, made to utter joy, and which had hitherto swelled their choirs, no longer fell on their entranced ear. There was a strange vacancy amidst those groves: untrodden paths and ungathered fruits. There was a fearful void and desertion: diadems and lyres lay in neglected heaps. The brows which had worn those diadems were now scarred by the wrath-blast, the hands which had struck those lyres were now bound with everlasting chains. Were not the heavens astonished and horribly afraid and very desolate at this?

But that Heaven might not always remain thus diminished, that holy angels might not always lament

* Jude 6. "Ἀρχήν." First estate, principal in rank, not first or original in order of time. "Ἀρχάς." Eph. vi. 12.

this decrease of their number and this defection from their honour, an early intimation was afforded them that this withdrawment should be replaced by a large accession, that such accession should be raised from another order of beings,—beings who had themselves lapsed, and whom a most stupendous salvation should rescue from all their guilt and rebelliousness and ruin,—that these should constitute an incomputible augmentation over the deficiency and loss,—that the breach should be repaired, that the dearth should be supplied, and that all the mansions of the heavenly House, forsaken as it was, should be inhabited again.

A Book of life was unfolded, a decree was declared, and the Eternal Son already saw the nations and the ends of that purposed world his inheritance and possession. His delights were with the sons of men. The kingdom was prepared! All things were ready! A door was opened in heaven!——

And there was a *wonder in heaven.* Meek and humble, there bent before the Divine Majesty, a solitary human spirit. It sung, but it was a lonely song. It gazed, but its eye rested upon nothing like itself. Its thoughts and affections circled within their own undivided consciousness. It could find none who were naturally like-minded with it. None had ever sinned of its new associates, none had wept, none had died. It had brought a new history with it to heaven. It had carried hither mingled emotions which only it could know. Found it nothing strange,—nothing incommunicable,—nothing which it was difficult to learn,—nothing which it could not reciprocate?

But the soul of righteous Abel did not long feel alienation there. Up from this world another and another sprung. He the solitary was set in a family. He the lonesome was surrounded by a throng. And what was the great multitude whom no man could number, which,

in a far distant age, the seer of Patmos recognised in his heavenly rapture,—what were the hundred and forty and four thousands of the sealed and the redeemed,—but the pledges and forerunners of a far-reaching constituency of converted peoples, of converted generations, of a converted world,—humble figures but as multiplying powers, low statements but as prophetic earnests? Who can scan its present amount? Who can anticipate its final aggregate?

The question of preponderance, in the number of the saved over that of the lost, might now be properly argued. But we content ourselves with a few observations which may place the subject intelligibly before us. The proportion of infant death, the certainty of infant salvation, furnish us with most pleasant grounds on which to rest the argument. What an accession does the early fading of the little ones give to the glorious company! Scarcely can we repress the thought of their infant hymn, of their hosannah in that temple, of the praise which is perfected and the strength which is ordained out of their young lips! Scarcely can we fail to see "the lambs feeding after their manner!"—The design of punishment comprehends warning. The direct acts of vengeance have been dealt to "set forth example." They have been kindled as beacon flames. Now it does not consist with such a purpose that the few shall be benefited by the overthrow of the many. We may presume without irreverence, *this purpose being revealed*, that the good of the majority is sought, and that they who perish form a very inferior proportion to those who are saved.—There are certain implications concerning these ratios which we cannot overlook. Sometimes they are equal. "Five of them were wise and five were foolish." In other instances there is an encouraging difference. Two of the servants, among three, are "good and faithful:" the third alone is "wicked and unprofitable." Still higher is placed that relative state:

"the wedding is furnished with guests," all duly appareled and royally approved, and only one is without the qualifying badge.—Christianity, as the reign of grace, asserts its purpose and pledges its supremacy. "Not as the offence, so also is the free gift." "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." "That in the ages to come, God might show forth the exceeding riches of his grace." Shall sin predominate and proclaim more victims than this grace can enumerate subjects? We speak on no original bearing of these questions, but simply restrict ourselves to them as they come under this announcement. Were none of our species saved, God were infinitely just and good. But He has declared himself. By that declaration of mercy we gratefully abide.—Models of prayer are instituted for us. "Let all the people praise Thee." "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." These anticipations are, then, assured possibilities: we are taught to seek them with believing expectation: they may be fulfilled: and the inference cannot be violent that they shall.—A glorious sequel to our earth's dark history is foretold. "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ." There is commotion in "the many waters,—peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues." "The people shall be all righteous." "All shall know Him from the least unto the greatest." "All these gather themselves." "They fly as a cloud." "They flow together."—"Many shall come" and there are "many mansions." As if no area could contain them, their habitation towers upward and climbs on high. As if the capacity of one abode to receive them could not be imagined, their dwellings are widely spread. O that crowd, that ingathering of the blest! The glorious Church! The King's Daughter! The Lamb's Wife! In her raiment of needlework! In her clothing of wrought gold! In her garments redolent of myrrh, aloes, and cassia breathing out clouds around her pro-

cession ! Not forgetting her Father's house, but entering into it and finding it the same with the King's palace !

2. *The Inequality of their Glory.*

Under the constitution of mercy nothing is more clearly and frequently revealed than the doctrine of rewards. Truth is always self-harmonious, and consequently these rewards are such that they agree to mercy, and this mercy is such that it agrees with rewards. The mercy is not indifferent to conduct, and the conduct is not independent of mercy. It is mercy which promises the result,—a result generally rising out of the course which it directs us to pursue. It is not surely the less free that it dictates our good and secures it. A very faithfulness, even an equity, is assumed by it in the promise which it loves to give. "For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love." Where there are rewards, there must be differences. They suppose adaptation and adjustment to every form and habit of excellence. Do all show the same diligence? Do all inherit the promises through the same degree of faith and patience? The principle and fact of a correspondence between what we are and what we shall be, is described as hereafter "receiving the things done in the body." "He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." "He who soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." "We gather wages to life eternal." "We lay up a good foundation for the time to come." We "make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness, that when we fail they may receive us into everlasting habitations." "*So* shall an entrance be ministered unto us *abundantly* into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

This is the simple doctrine of Christian responsibility and recompense. "God is the rewarder of them who diligently seek him." And that all cannot share a uniform

glory is evident from the difference of capacity. To him who hath ten talents, the doubled deposit, is the forfeited trust transferred. One star differeth from another star in glory. This man has been like a continued sigh and aspiration and panting after holiness. That man, truly sincere, has pursued a far less devoted course. These could not enjoy the same portion. The organ, the susceptibility, is not the same. Nor is there a supposeable alternative, save that all were forcibly, mechanically, conformed to one standard. There would be, then, a necessity to lower as well as to raise, to repress as well as to expand. The first process would be unjust, however the second might be gracious. Still, they being correlative acts, if either were unjust, both would be unjust; if either were gracious, both must be gracious. This is self-evidently false and absurd. The speed of a zealous life would give no advantage in the immortal race. The care of the vigilant saint, that no man should take his crown, would leave that crown no safer, no more fairly adorned nor brightly set. But all this is impossible. For it is contrary to the moral character of Deity and repugnant to all the principles of moral government. It is as impossible because it is a business of dispositions. These cannot be arbitrarily altered. They are mere manifestations of the will, and this cannot be coerced.—Yet if these inequalities exist, some think they must engender envy. Is it necessarily thus even in this imperfect state of ours? There is a joy, a gratulation, in preeminent worth, in exalted goodness, which this canker does not corrode. Charity envieth not. Do we not mark with unrepining delight "them who walk so, having them for ensamples?" The love of the brethren knows no rule but their excellence: but then if all are to be loved because all are excellent, all can only be loved according to their excellence. Does not this vary? So also must the love. And if now there be this alloy of unholy jealously, can it be found in

heaven? Nothing is loved but holiness in that blessed place, and the highest holiness is loved the most. It is an impulse to the universal joy and improvement. Compartment shall open after compartment of our Father's house, and the most diversified range of excellence, all the intermediate distinctions of glory and virtue, shall find their appropriate dwelling and assigned sphere. The "many mansions" graduate the scale and the measure by which God becomes to his children their "exceeding great reward."

3. *The Diversity of their Character.*

Strong peculiarities of mind now obtain among the good. They are marked by their type or are distributable into their class. "The common salvation" does not destroy these features. "The like precious faith" only serves their distinct indication. Such belong to the constitution of mind. Were that an inferior thing, it would be universally assimilated: it is its transcendence, in the will of good or evil, that causes each to stand out from each. When two human wills exactly accord, then the minds to which they are attached, or, more properly speaking, which they represent and express, shall precisely coincide. The modifications of the regenerated soul are not fewer and less notable than those of the soul unrenewed. Some of these resolve themselves into physical structure, general temperament, and they will probably terminate with the present state of existence. But others have a deeper struck and more vital root. Such germs are given for development. They are the elements of the great, the commanding, the tender. They impress themselves upon all acts. They originate vast histories. They demand their maturity in more native scenes. They are as the nascent sinew and plumage of the wing which shall buoy up the soul for ever. And who does not rejoice in this difference of mental powers and habits, this diversity of gifts and graces, during the earthly exhibition

of Christianity? The sturdy vigour, the unflinching constancy, the impetuous bravery, the artless simplicity, the shrinking diffidence? The Paul, the Apollos, the Cephas? The man, the babe, in Christ? Is it not a pleasing miscellany? Like the cedar of the mountain, the palm of the plain, the olive of the copse? Like the treasures of the mine, the precious stones of divers colours? In heaven our nature has not perished but is perfected: our being is only fulfilled. All of it is brought out and glorified. And must not the spectacle afford a measureless delight? Are not strength, loftiness, loveliness, of character, attributes for a high and generous complacency? May not these dictate the same biasses and pursuits? What pleasure will it create always to discern the new, to trace the contrasted, to expatiate in the boundless! What pleasure, to mark the feature and lineament of millions of spirits in its distinctness of sweetness and beauty and force! What pleasure, to search through these "many mansions," and to find every form of worth and might, every species of intellectual activity and spiritual perfection,—whatever is ideal now, the visions of which scarcely gleam upon our imagination,—all endlessly, as actually, variegated, multiplied, and combined! How consummate the glories of that moral greatness, which shall be seen ascending through all that House, to "its uppermost rooms and its chief seats!"

4. *The Transition of their Employment.*

In attentively regarding the laws of our nature, we may conclude as to what it will always be, what it can only be. We must, indeed, be cautious in examining how far these are temporary and circumstantial, how far essential and permanent, laws. But few of these seem to be more original than that which requires change of study and occupation. One investigation, uncheckered and unrelieved, strains the mind. One

enjoyment, unvaried and undiverted, cloys. The glorified spirit may, therefore, not only find its mansion, but be free of the many mansions. Unfixed in irrevocable task, unrelated to irremissible province, it may go forth from scene to scene, from engagement to engagement, as from fountain to fountain of living water. It may find its cycle of ever-exciting activities and of ever-fresh delights. Thus may it renew its youth and recreate its immortality. Now shall it offer Praise. It makes melody. It pours forth a strain of gratitude, which our cold hearts and our discordant notes cannot imitate. It sings the new song, a song of deliverance, the song of a feast, the song of a solemnity, the song of a triumph.—It bends in Adoring Contemplation. It sees the King in his beauty. It gazes and is not afraid. Yet is it beatifically awed. The trance is upon it, speechless, moveless,—it seeks silence even in heaven,—it is rapt, overwhelmed,—it is lost in love,—it is delighting itself in God,—it is feeling that there is none in heaven but He,—it is taking Him as its portion for ever!—It exercises itself in the Research of wonder and mystery. It plunges into the depths. Its profoundest faculties are engrossed. It knows what only it may explore. It cherishes no impatience of every necessary confine beyond which it may not press. Every enquiry is followed by some new information of truth. Every employment of the mind braces its health and vigour, enlarges its ken, and clears its contemplation.—It cultivates Communion with all other heavenly spirits. What may not angels, who have ministered to the heirs of salvation, tell of their knowledge and their experience? Will they disdain the converse of those whom they have so long guided, upholden, protected, and at last wafted to these mansions? What saints are there, and we shall recognise the Moses and the Elias on that Mount! Abraham shall not be ignorant of us, nor Israel refuse to acknowledge us. David shall not strike his harp

with abated skill and fervour, nor Daniel be less the man greatly beloved. We shall be the companions of all. Friendship! there is thy native seat and only there! There mayst thou find thy preference, the disciple whom thou lovest,—there mayst thou first find thy brother,—but coldness, repulse, treachery, thou shalt never find!—And Benevolence demands its ministrations. To do good is the joy, the instinct, the support, of goodness. Charity never faileth. We do not at present understand how this may be. Guilt and misery now call it forth. What can our benevolence avail in heaven? But are we not then to be still more filled with the love of God, more delineated with the image of Christ, more imbued with love for all saints? Is all this to be denied opportunity and expression? Is the spring to be shut up and sealed. Beyond our complacency in the excellent of heaven, in whom shall be all our delight, there cannot but be the interchange of the offices of love. We shall have a power to bless. Our happiness shall be raised by the capacity of raising happiness. There will be good works, and not without necessary uses. There will be things good and profitable unto men, though men in heaven. Suffice it to say, that it is on record, "His servants shall serve him." We await the allotment and the direction of that service.—But in what we foreshadow, we see the law of change and variety. The vision is around them, and from every side of their horizon they may survey it. Each effort brings its repose. "They rest not," they do not cease, and in that ceaselessness of activity is their rest. Their whole soul is exhilarated by the constancy of their occupation and its equally constant diversity: every faculty is knitted into strength, every taste preserved in zest, by the untiring order of their duties and the unsating succession of their delights. It is an evolution of "many mansions."

5. *The Regularity of their Arrangement.*

It has been premised that much of the happiness of the redeemed in heaven arises from the form of their character, the kind and degree of their usefulness, upon earth. As the wicked are filled with their own ways, go to their own place, receive the recompense which is meet,—so the dispositions and acts of the new creature enure him to glory, honour, and immortality. He antedates heaven, he is wrought for the self-same thing, he rejoices with joy that is full of glory. A heaven shall break from within him, and not only gather round him. The good works are manifest beforehand. They do follow. All the saved shall have their name and place within those walls. There are many mansions for the appropriation. In this "great house," every "vessel," all "sanctified and meet for the Master's use," has its valuation and its function. And it is, therefore, pleasant to think of the inhabitants of heaven according to certain classifications, and to enrol them in moral genealogies. "The destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together." The righteous shall have "rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another," but still he belongs to a company or tribe. The transgressors are compared to tares, bound into bundles; the righteous shine as the stars, in clusters and constellations. Think of the holy and the devoted, "but every man in his own order." There is the mansion of the patriarchs, their thoughts still full of sacrifice, their visions still glowing with good things to come, still surrounded by the angels whom they on earth had entertained unawares. There is the mansion of the prophets, singing still as in their choir! There is the mansion of the apostles, pointing still to the atoning Lamb! There is the mansion of the martyrs, as new baptised from the flames! There is the mansion of faithful ministers, discriminating among the throng those who are their glory and their crown! There is the

mansion of pious parents, their solicitudes fulfilled and their prayers answered in the conversion of their offspring! There is the mansion of zealous teachers, exulting over the little children whom they rescued from ignorance and vice! There is the mansion of self-sacrificing missionaries, as on set thrones, surrounded by their converts from the heathen! There are the mansions prepared for the millions upon millions which are still to come to "the church of the first-born," that they without us, that we without them, should not be made perfect. "Yet there is room." And if new circumstances shall arise, impressing new aspects and shapes of character, mansions shall not be wanting to them, comely, bright, and capacious, where they may live insphered. "I will place them in their houses, saith the Lord." But there is in these orders nothing repulsive nor arrogant, nothing humiliated nor depressed; there is no wall of partition; all is intermingled; all is one; one acclaiming host! one holy community! one happy family! All the places round about are a blessing! They are heavenly places in Christ Jesus!

6. *The Series of their Progression.*

The tendencies and yearnings of the human mind are towards an indefinite life and advancement. These keep us restless and dissatisfied while we are in our sins: these excite us to grow in grace, to follow on to know the Lord, to lay hold on eternal life, when we receive the grace of God in truth. If there was a point in our existence at which we must be hopelessly resisted, beyond which we could learn nothing further and enjoy nothing more,—large as the information already attained, vast as the happiness already found,—that would be the limit of well-being. Of little consequence would it be whether we then ceased to desire, or only desired in vain. Our misery, instead of being lessened by what we had acquired, would be unspeakably aggravated. The prospect which

had drawn out our soul would be suddenly closed against it. It would be like an ascent to some everlasting hill to gaze for first and for last our full of the glorious land, not then to die amidst the rapture, but to be doomed to life beneath the sudden fall of an endless night. We should feel that our nature was reversed. It was not allowed its growth. It was stunted and overborne. Now this is the description of what belongs to God's presence: "fulness of joy." But that alone would involve satiety: "At his right hand there are *pleasures for evermore.*" While in our pilgrimage, the mercies which are new every morning inspire fresh joys and praises. There shall be in heaven ever-opening wells of delight. Nothing can be stationary in its knowledge or in its bliss. It is a field for boundless meliorations. It is a track for onward footsteps. The song is a song of degrees! The heaven is a heaven of heavens! From the lowest mansion the spirit may ascend to a higher and a higher still. There must be a period when we shall have overtaken all the fire of the present Paul, all the love of the present John. There must be a period when we shall sing a sweeter strain than now is heard from the sweetest singer beneath the throne. There must be a period when our intellect shall have stretched beyond the capacities of the greatest actual intellect. Perhaps an œconomy of tuition may be supposed. "One of the elders" may awaken curiosity to gratify it. "There may be given us a reed," that we should judge the measurements of things for ourselves. "A fellow-servant and of them which keep the sayings of this book" may show us the "pure river of water of life," carrying us along "either side," until we mark the very source. So they who were "faithful over a few things are appointed *rulers* over many things:" they "have *authority* over ten cities." Here is the symbol of influence, and it must be benevolently employed. May it not imply mutual assistance and in-

struction? A constant fulfilling of the law of Christ? And thus these many mansions shall rise in an interminable series. How high may the lowest believer reach! How incalculably may the highest transcend themselves! Nor is there difficulty. The interval is still between the finite and the infinite! The stretch for these progressions is the duration of eternity!

Such, Dear Christians, is your solemn home, your holy habitation! There you shall be at rest. There shall gather around you the family of the redeemed. Each countenance wears an unfading smile. The eye knows no tear. There is endless greeting. The heart swells with transport. There is the full tide of love. Identity and variety lend their charms. It is our house! There are many mansions!

My Father's House! Where, in distance space, rise thy pinnacles? Where sweep thy many mansions? Where, in the star-kindled firmament, is thy ethereal dome? It is in "His holy heaven!" When shall mine eyes see thee? When shall my feet stand in the midst of thee? When shall thy children all be brought home? When shall the latest born have passed thy gate? When shall the hymn of that great assemblage salute the ear, and bless the grace, of Him who hath said, "I will be a father unto you!" "O that I had wings, like a dove, then would I flee away and be at rest!" Amen.

SERMON III.

VALID CHRISTIANITY.

1 Cor. iv. 20.

For the Kingdom of God is not in Word, but in Power.

No phrase is of more frequent recurrence in the writings of both Testaments than this, "the kingdom of God." It was originally the prophetic description of the Christian dispensation: evangelists, apostles, and the Messiah himself, adopted and employed it. There is, however, a disadvantage in the translated term. Kingdom generally expresses the territory reigned over, rather than the reign itself. But the idea required is that of the authority or the rule, not of the realm which it governs. Dominion might answer, but that when used in the plural it equally suggests the thought of extended space, and is not indeed necessarily imperial. Sovereignty might serve, but that it has obtained a specific force and value in theological nomenclature. Royalty might suffice, but that it commonly denotes special privilege and prerogative, and when multiplied, royalties are understood to signify the seignioral rights of peculiar estates and domains. Monarchy is liable to the same objection, it being of the same mixed sense. It is well to seize a single expression, rather than that we should be compelled to compound several terms. Regal sway, domination, supremacy, are cumbrous, ungraceful, unpointed, combinations: rule is feeble, reign only a little

better, while king-ship, though not quite faultless, is, perhaps, the happiest substitute of all. With this criticism we shall now proceed no farther: we only value it as it conveys a just limitation: nor shall we make any service of it in altering the given phrase. That is so familiar to our ear that any other would sound harshly to us. All that is necessary is, to disabuse our mind of locality and area when we "speak of the glory of this kingdom," and when we would "make known to the sons of men the glorious majesty of this kingdom." Let our thinking be of a simple principle and administration of Divine government.

This "kingdom" is special. It is not the kingdom which is the Lord's as the Governor among the nations. It is not the kingdom of God in the outward dispensation of the gospel, a kingdom which is "preached" unto us, which has "come nigh" unto us. It is not the kingdom of God, the sphere of celestial bliss, to which we are "called," and "for which we suffer." It is spiritual. "It cometh not with observation." It is "within us." We can only "see" it,—we can only "enter" it,—by being "born again." It is not ceremonial observance, but "righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost." Its "mystery" can alone be appreciated by subjection to it. It is so inestimable in its rich hopes and lofty dignities, that we must "seek it first,"—that is, before all things,—in point of time and in ardour of solicitude!

This kingdom of God has control of the hidden man of the heart, is not in "word,"—a formal show, an unbinding dictate,—a mere proclamation and behest,—a splendid spectacle and pageant,—it is in Power. This is a thing very difficult to define. To tell us that it is ability, capacity, strength, is vain. It is idle repetition. They are only other words. You have not advanced a step towards the explanation. The most decisive mode to treat it is, to unite it in our own minds with some

change which we cannot but think ourselves have produced, some effect which, without perplexing ourselves in mere verbal subtilty, we know that we have wrought. I will to pluck that flower: my hand is the instrument: it is extended: its fingers lay hold of the flower: the flower is gathered: I had the power: and this is the result. I will to think of a certain subject: my attention is given to it: my meditations embrace it: the thought stands up before me: I have accomplished my purpose. I will to impress my fellow-creature's mind: I avail myself of the reasonings suited to such an aim, or I work upon his excitable feelings by more direct appeals. Concerning power little more can be understood. It will better reveal its true meaning in the facts which the text will identify, and the illustrations which it will enforce. Christianity will then appear, and approve itself, as a scheme of singular influence, a mysterious potency, an outforce of incessant action, a spring of water welling up without effort or exhaustion, a rod of strength and ever-budding life: and it will be seen, also, that Christians, informed with the same quickening spirit, burn with its zeal, move with its courage; that they act with its habit, travail with its purpose: "thereunto labouring, agonising with an energy which energises in them mightily." "The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power."

Having offered these prefatory remarks, we propose to consider True and Vital and Experienced Christianity in its Dignified Character and Energetic Ascendency.

I. IN FOLLOWING THE HOLY SCRIPTURE WE MUST SPEAK OF RELIGION IN ITS HOLD AND OPERATION UPON THE HEART AS NOTHING LESS THAN THE KINGDOM OF GOD.

And, accordingly, you must lay out of your minds all notion of wide and wealthy empires, of powerful and accumulated states; of diadems, thrones, and sceptres. No ensign is to be set up around which the warrior could rally. No standard is to flap its folds which might

tempt cupidity and ambition. It is not victory which any worldly project could apply. It is not aggrandisement which any sordid folly could convert to its design. Nothing must be left to dazzle the fancy and charm the sense. You must remove all your ideas to the inner recesses of the soul. With that spirit, shut out from every thing besides, must you, henceforth, commune. There does this kingdom fix its seat. There it issues its mandate. There it expends its operation. That field is withdrawn from mortal notice, and the treasure, which is now buried in it, gives it not only an incalculable value but converts it into a productive mine of riches! It was, ere God planted his kingdom in it, a den of anarchy and misrule. It belonged to the kingdom of Satan. It was full of darkness, torn by division, embroiled by confusion, distracted with strife. Ignorance even to blindness, decided all. Vile affections, like knotted adders, brooded there. The soul was seen degenerate, "earthly, sensual, and devilish." Conscience abetted all, but still wielded an iron flail and scorpion scourge. What a wild uproar! What a ceaseless confusion! Accusation and excuse! Hateful and hating! Deceived and being deceived! A cavern of the winds! A cage of unclean birds! A troubled sea which cannot rest! Mind without due sobriety, Fancy without lovely vision, Freedom without high independence, Feeling without sweet repose! Cries of rebellion fill it: "Who is the Almighty that we should serve him?" "Cause the Holy One of Israel to cease from before us!" But in our conversion God's reign begins. "Yield yourselves to God as those that are alive from the dead." "Submit yourselves unto God." "Be ye reconciled unto God." This surrender is full and unconditional. It is loyal attachment. It is filial as well as subjectional. It regards His character: "We joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement." It welcomes his truth: "Ye

have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you." It appropriates his cause: "If we live, we live unto the Lord." It claims oneness with his people: we are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God." It is allied to disposition: "the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ."

The atonement of the cross, by bringing pardon and peace, introduces us into this state of mind. It slays our enmity. It "casts down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." We have found out our true and perfect law of liberty. Our conscience is purged from dead works to *serve* the living God. "The kingdom is quiet before him." We are "willing in the day of his power." All is moved by choice and love. We are "translated" into it. We "receive" it. We are "joyful in our King." The rule is carried on by our cheerful response to all he requires or avers. "When He saith, Seek ye my face, our heart saith unto him, Thy face, Lord, will we seek." In our heart is set a mirror from which His own glory darts. There is hung a lyre which His own breath stirs into melody. He "works within us to will and to do." He "draws and we run after him." No violence is offered to our freedom of agency or to our springs of action. The cords of a man vibrate in us. The bands of love are our only strait and chain. We do the will of God from the heart. He has reconciled us, and we are at peace with him. Though "sometime alienated and enemies in our mind by wicked works," we repent us of our treason and tear down the banner of our rebellion. Though other lords have had dominion over us we renounce the claims of all. He has "overturned," and he has "come whose right it is." He dwelleth in us and we in him. The peace of God rules in our hearts.

Our professed subjection to the gospel of Christ displays but the love of the truth which is in us. Sin reigned: it has no more dominion. Satan enthralled: he cometh, but that Wicked now toucheth us not. The present evil world prevailed: our faith now overcometh the world. Grace reigns through righteousness unto eternal life. Through the greatness of Thy power have thine enemies submitted themselves unto thee!

The kingdom of God supposes the constant operation of authority, and of the sense of law. No created nature can be so raised as to act in thoughtlessness of it. The holiest seraph would fall the moment he ceased to have respect to its requisitions. To the most sinless creatures the divine authority is the ever-present idea. There are some who speak of law as if it only was the concernment of the wicked. They having read that "the law is not made for the righteous man but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and for sinners,"—take as its meaning that the righteous man needs not its rule, that his tendency and disposition toward righteousness supersede the occasion for the rule. But it is only of the *penalty* that the passage speaks. The *threatening* of the law is not made for the just. For if the rule was not made for him, what would be his standard of righteousness? How could he justify and challenge that character? How could he know that the law written in his heart was the proper copy, if there were no original? What would be the perfection of heaven, if there were no archetype to which it referred? There can be no excellence without such guide and commandment. And though when we would think of celestial purity, we may love to dwell on its inward promptings, its native spontaneities, as that which is morally necessary and essential,—yet we shall forego the highest conception of it unless we deem it, at every instant of its exercise, intelligent, voluntary, and directed according to the mind of Christ, the will of the

Deity. The conviction that it is right and binding will ever sway the spirits of the redeemed. They will do all as service and obedience. Law is to the eye and ear of holiness the noblest directory, the sweetest sound. It tells of high destiny. It is the call to glory and virtue. It points to, it shines along, it makes bright, a track of indefinite advancement. It is the way-mark of an endless career. It rises the day-star of eternal ages. It is the radiancy of our glory. It is the melody of our song. What would be the symmetry of the soul, if there were no pattern to which it was conformed? What would be its harmony if there were no concord with which it was attuned? It must look beyond itself. It must rise to its source. Its wing was made for flight. And if even now, with so much guilt upon us, with so much depravity in us, law loses its fearful and condemnatory associations and becomes a pleasing and delightful term,—"the law of faith," "the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus making us free from the law of sin and death," "proving what is that good and perfect and acceptable will of the Lord,"—how must it warm to ecstasy and swell with triumph the spirits of just men made perfect, acting as a gratulation on their course, as an impulse to their purpose, as a prize for their ambition! "The highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness, and it shall be for those." In keeping such commandment is heaven's great reward. That heaven is a kingdom! The throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and his servants shall serve him! Only they who do his commandments have right to its tree of life. Therein dwelleth righteousness. Objective rule and subjective principle constitute that righteousness in all its forms and movements. Our hearts shall enlarge with the ways of these commandments. As we do not here make void the law, so there the law shall be "used lawfully," and we shall eternally experience "wherefore it serveth!" How

otherwise could it be? Are we ever to lay down the yoke of Christ? When can we cease to be under the law to Him? It is now the kingdom of God. He shall order and establish it with judgment and justice from henceforth even for ever. We seek a kingly œconomy in heaven! The everlasting kingdom, and an abundant entrance into it! To reign with him for ever and ever! To judge the world! To judge angels! Kings and priests to God and to his Christ! To fall down before the throne, and to cast our crowns before the throne!

> "For when yon heavens have passed away,
> We still shall glory to obey."

It is well known with what a graceful fervour human fealty has often borne itself. How it has rallied about the menaced throne or followed the fortunes of the royal exile! It asked but unbought and unrewarded service. It endured for some beloved master hopeless reverse and mischance. It has chivalrously courted danger and poverty. It has sought no prouder insignia than banishment and captivity. A generous devotion has sustained it. The darker the eclipse which greatness suffered, the steadier was its faith. It has pawned its honour, its life, its all, upon some perilous adventure. Interests the most sacred it has set upon a cast. Its crest of allegiance has been without fear and reproach. It yielded itself up with a full abandonment to its purpose. And does not this proud submission, which knows no change, which rises with peril and strengthens with defeat, shame our coldness, little short of treason, to Jesus our king, and to his cause which is the kingdom of heaven upon earth? What is our tribute? Where are our efforts and sacrifices for his throne? Where is our jealousy of his honour? Where is our loyalty to his fame? Do we stand to his ensign? Would we die in his cause? He is the only Potentate. He is Prince of the kings of the earth. All souls are his. He claims the things which are God's. His

kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. It hastens. It advances. Knees bow. Strongholds yield. Hearts surrender. He must reign until all his enemies become his footstool. He shall have dominion from sea to sea. His sceptre is a right sceptre! All nations shall serve him.

Auspicious æra! Blessed consummation! The Lamb has overcome! The Lord God omnipotent reigneth! The people are all righteous! All know him from the least unto the greatest! Not a foothold is left the usurper. The captives are free. The slain live. The Redeemer has taken possession of his rights. He is publicly inaugurated in royal state and majesty. On his head are many crowns. His power is over all minds. He owns no subjects but spirits. Now is come the kingdom of our God and the power of his Christ. It is done! The world's heart is conquered for him, and He draws forth from it the warmest homage which can fill it. Its affections rise to him a cloud of inextinguishable incense, a concert of everlasting song! . . . Thy Kingdom come!

II. THIS KINGDOM IS AFFIRMED BY THE TEXT TO REST IN A MIGHTY INFLUENCE, "TO BE IN POWER."

It has a visible framework of doctrines,—a still more visible apparatus of ordinances. While its proper seat is in the mind, it has always an external type and reference. It has its central form. We call it Revelation. It is the Gospel. It is Christianity.

The Author of nature often suspends on apparently inadequate causes the most stupendous results. Each calculation we had formed is baffled, each test which we had applied is set aside. All is noiseless and simple. The works of *man* are in contrast. In them is a bustling ostentation. Each spring and wire of his apparatus is exposed. But with their utmost modesty the divine operations are always efficient. Though we only know that God has been working by the work, that

work is the perfect proof. And still the contrast is maintained to all this quiet independence. Man, compelled to the employment of complicated means, exhibits, whatever their cost and labour, trivial effects. He accomplishes, after the severest strain and struggle, only little things. With God is the hiding of power, until it is done, until it stands fast: with the creature there is parade, effort, vanity, until his impotence shames him!

This may be illustrated by the image now before us. Government is known in every condition of social man. The ultimate sanction of every government is force. But that force is indicated by pageantry, by heraldry, by weapon. It proclaims itself by guards and lictors. Pride, pomp, and circumstance, dazzle from every side. Yet is it, at a very early stage, a barren spectacle. It reaches but a little way. Carried to its furthest, it can kill the body. Bring forth the instruments of torture and death! Break the body upon the wheel: consume it in the flame! It can kill the body. Let the mangled flesh be cast to the lions: let the ashes of the charred flesh be scattered to the winds. It can kill the body. How shortened is its arm! How speedy is its check! *There is no more that it can do!* Within the still smaller limit its command is feeble. It cannot decide opinion. It cannot fetter conscience. If benevolent, few are the blessings which it can apply. If tyrannic, as few are the ills which it can inflict. It is a narrow thing. The soul defies it. If the hand of violence strike at the soul, the soul hides in its consciousness or escapes in its immortality.—But the kingdom of God is an embodiment of august ascendancy. It is not indebted to the adventitious and the external appendage. It is not of this world. It wants not palaces, courts, armies. It disdains a tinsel glory. It is great in the greatness, it is strong in the strength, of its King. It borrows nothing save from him. He has a mighty arm: strong is his hand and high is his right hand. His

kingdom is not superficial, a lie of pretension, a brilliant dream: archives without authority, titles without truth, symbols without meaning! All has being and subsistence here. It lives in the thoughts and intents of its subjects. It is a dispensation of principles and motives. It is a walking in light. It is good-will doing service. It cannot be enfeebled by extention. It is equally puissant in each and all. Its tables are written on every mind, its judgment-seat is in every conscience, its throne is in every heart. The Presence is alike diffused. The Prerogative is universally exercised. Is not this *Power?* Power so complete, so searching, so invariably distributed, that every other idea of ruling power becomes a mockery, and its proudest device a toy?

We need not wonder, therefore, that Christianity made its early boast of this attribute. A signal power attended its outset. The Saviour taught as having authority. His favourite disciples did not taste of death till they had seen the kingdom of God come with power. Glorious victories were won. Philosophy, and violence, furnished occasion for its triumphs. It supplied new moulds for thought and new theatres for action. It was the visitation of a new life. Another spirit went forth over the earth. A divine nature was infused into man. Institutions of the most elaborate skill and most colossal firmness dissolved before its holy charm. The swords of thirty legions shrunk to their scabbards before its prowess. It marched on conquering and to conquer. The world beheld it with amazement. The doctrine was the strange and the improbable. The instrumentality was the rude and the imbecile. The ambition was the inconsiderate and the ill-prepared. Yet with a world against it, it rose superior to a world. Little checked it. Nothing withstood it. It grew up into a vast intellectual and moral dominion, diverse from every other government, having no local confines, brooking no selfish jealousies, con-

verting the rebel soul and restoring it to God. It was in *Power.*

Now we would not for a moment be led away from the most sincere acknowledgment that the true efficiency of the gospel depends upon the influence of the Holy Spirit. If it come not in word only, but in power, it is because it comes in the Holy Ghost. We speak of Him in all the glories of his Godhead. We speak of Him and honour him in his œconomic offices. We do not immerse his working in any means. We abjure any notion that he is in the word. He is,—though the God of order, though faithful to his promise, being the Spirit of promise, being the Spirit of Christ,—He is external to all, independent of all, absolute over all. We love no intermediate hypothesis. He is given to us. He is sent forth into our heart. He is the Agent, the one and the self-same Spirit, directly communicating with us, constantly working in us. Truth is His *instrument,* but it cannot be his *subject:* the subject of his operation must be the intelligent and accountable nature of man. "We are strengthened with all might by the Spirit in the inner man." "The Power of the Holy Ghost" is, therefore, the trust and stay of our minds when we look at the difficulties which beset the progress of the gospel. The "work of faith" is "with power." "The gospel of Christ" is "the power of God unto salvation." The "earthen vessel" is contemned or broken that there may flash out that "excellency of power," which it could neither hide nor assist. We cannot entertain too enlarged and transcendent conceptions of "the exceeding greatness of the power to usward who believe." He is the "Spirit of Power!"

But the "power" which is ascribed to the kingdom of God in the text, though always presupposing, though always depending upon, the Divine Influence, is not the same with it. It belongs to the theme itself. It grows out of it, and is its legitimate due. It is a moral power.

And there is power of the highest created order, wherever there is *mind*. Muscular and mechanical agencies are but means and auxiliaries: they must be put into motion by something higher than themselves. A web of nerves, a succession of cylinders, cannot be self-motive. A reasoning and a willing impulse is required. What, therefore, is conceivable as power but mind in its use of certain helps and instruments? It is the centre of each movement, the arbiter of each result. We need not quote an adage but two centuries old, Knowledge is power,—when we can find the sentiment far more nobly and anciently expressed in our Bible: "A wise man is strong; yea, a man of knowledge increaseth strength." * How mind acts upon mind! What vibrations bound from a single thought! What immortality broods in a simple notice! It crosses seas. It pervades nations. It survives ages. The loins of kings are loosed. Whole peoples are transformed. Not only thoughts, but the seeds of thoughts, interminable suggestions, are cast into the world of mind. Then will it be impossible to measure that impetus and confirmation which Christianity has given already to human intellect, that new burden of holy ideas with which it lades its memory, that new career of benevolent activities with which it excites its zeal. It alone awakens man. Through its precepts he gets understanding. He is full of an inward life. It reminds him of the image in which he was made, and which he has lost. It fills him with shame and confusion that he has sunk so low. It informs him of the infinite gentleness which can once more make him great. It assures him that though a banished one, God has devised means whereby he should not be expelled from him. It turns his thoughts inwardly upon himself. It bids his spirit make diligent search. He learns what he is. He discovers how he has been beguiled. He is now in his right mind. The hidden man

* Prov. xxiv. 5.

of the heart is upraised. The pulsation of an eternal life swells through him. He is a regenerate, but only to his first nature. He is "after God." What a development he experiences of what he was hitherto unawares! The eyes of his understanding are opened! His heart is "united" which was "divided!" The selfishness of his nature is rebuked. The weakness of wayward irresolution is abashed. An enfeebling sensuality is destroyed. A true greatness of tastes and aims is elicited. The entire soul is knitted into strength: strength of principle, strength of decision, strength of character, strength of influence. The religion of Christ alone brings out the stamina of our mental and moral constitution, alone affects our judgments and our sensibilities by the same objects, alone touches us at all points; stirs every innermost depth, and unbinds each latent energy, of the spirit. The measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ is appointed for our study and our standard, we grow up into Him in all things, we arm ourselves with the same mind, and are strong in the power of his might. The Power of Christ rests upon us. Our intimate, essential, being is evoked from its hiding-places; it puts itself forth in lofty purpose, cheerful sacrifice, and strenuous deed. We can do all things through Christ Jesus strengthening us.

But in contending for a species of moral power as attached to the kingdom of God itself, as inherent in the gospel of this kingdom, we may be asked, What can be the influence of the dead letter, the mere word? Let us meet the enquiry by a general illustration. The great masters of antiquity have long since passed away. They no longer teach in the grove nor thunder from the bema. Their spirits have been required of them. But their lore and eloquence have found some record. Their treatises and their orations have been committed to writing and handed down to us. It is dead letter, it is mere word.

But in them, by them, do not their minds still range and expatiate? Do they not exercise a mighty dominion over nations of which they had not heard? Do not our eyes turn back to them, and our ears drink in their strains? Are they not, as living among us, to instruct and inspire us? We might select a particular specimen of such diffusive or transmissive mind. Paul penned his arguments and censures. "His letters, said they, are powerful." So all that belongs to our religion, even that which is most external, is in power. There is a mightiness in the Scriptures. Its words, they are spirit and they are life. Let us enquire in what this *Power is extant?*

It is a *Power of Truth.* We are formed to admit the force and weight of this. None can prefer its opposites, whether it be error or falsehood. It is no reply that men addict themselves to deception, if a means to an end, for the end overcomes the repugnance to the means. Would the means of artifice be chosen for its own sake? Nor is it any reply, that insincere men often prefer deception to ingenuousness, for a new habit has thus been created, an intellectual obliquity has been induced, the very judgment of distinctions has been extinguished,—but how? by the violence which was done to the original state of the mind. Nor is it any reply that man is credulous, his credulousness proving a desire, an eagerness, after truth, however incautious his pursuit and ill-directed his quest. Dislike of truth may arise from objection to the *kind* of truth, but it is not of our nature to hate truth as truth, or what we believe to be truth. And Christianity takes it for her name. "The Truth," is her sublime designation. By the manifestation of the truth only does she seek the conversion of mankind. Now the Gospel founds itself upon facts. It is but the report and exposition of what was done, of what occurred, of what has come to pass. This is substantial truth. But it has always appealed to proof: and called on its

disciples to give a reason of their hope. Its evidence is clear and appreciable. It comes in much assurance. It justifies unfeigned faith. There was this stamp upon the statements of the Christian argument from the first. "With great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus." Their testimony was resistless. But that event witnessed for itself. We therefore read concerning "the power of His resurrection." And thus "the word of the truth of the gospel" impresses its own seal upon our soul. It is truth and no error: it is truth and no lie. It raises us to its independence. It makes us free. We can do nothing against the truth but for the truth. O the health of mind which springs from this conviction! And then the firm confidence and persuasion not only of its truth, but that it is truth which can sanctify and save! So adapted is it, that the Spirit of truth exclusively employs it in the new birth of the soul. Truth, and this kind of truth, constitute the element of such adaptation. And it is equally operative in the growth of Christian character and experience; when we receive it "not as the word of men but, as it is in truth, the word of God," then "it worketh effectually in us who believe." There rises up in us a calm, an assured, a fortified, energy when we can say: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true: this is the true God and eternal life."

It is a *Power of Authority.* Evidence may trace out truth, or revelation may discover it: but in religion we want, what its name implies, a binding force and sanction. A series of propositions may commend itself to us simply as agreeable to fact. But the gospel is of an infinitely higher character. It is the kingdom of God. It is divine obligation. It addresses our hopes and fears, our desire of happiness and our dread of misery. The binding

force and sanction is precisely this: "He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned." It is the law of faith. Except we repent we perish. We attend to these solemn warnings: "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" "What shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?" It will be objected by some that there can be no moral power in such a case: that all is the effect of fear. The answer to this objection is, that the authority of the gospel as a dispensation alone could impart the desired *confidence*. It is God's provision, here is our security: It is God's will, here is our warrant: It is God's command, here is our duty. In this fear of the Lord, this obedience of faith, there is strong confidence, there is a fountain of life. Where there is right and title, there will be boldness. God has set forth Christ as a propitiation through faith in his blood. He has set him forth for my faith! He has commanded me, at my soul's peril, to believe! I have no question, then, whether I may, whether I must. I am encouraged. I am enjoined. I believe. The good is before me. The requirement is upon me. I am strong in faith. I trust and am not afraid. I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed. But take away this authority, how weakened and prostrate is my faith: how bowed down and sunken is my spirit!—And this "power" of the kingdom of God will manifest itself in our exertions to promote it. *Content* yourselves with the idea that Christianity would be a general blessing to the human family, that its extension is therefore desirable, that philanthropy might well undertake it,—what would be the vigour of our Missionary institutions, or the power and spirit of our missionaries? But when we feel that "the mystery is to be made known to all nations according to the *commandment* of the everlasting God," we receive our commission; we cry, "Necessity is laid upon us, yea woe is unto us if we

preach not the gospel;" and it is only as the missionary hearkens to the bidding, "Go," that all of home and country loosens around him, and he says, "I go." There is power, a facility of power, a directness of power, a self-respect of power, a fearlessness of power,—in conscious duty, in simple obedience. This is the will of God,—it is the word of a King,—this is our obligation,—we have nothing to care for consequences, we go not at our own caprices or charges,—but we are "bold in our God!" Any other principle would swerve: this is unblenching. It confers not with flesh and blood. It attends to the work before it, and seeks neither better reason nor better motive than that God has appointed it. At once that meek devotedness fills the weakest intellect with a giant-strength. "His word is in our heart as a burning fire shut up in our bones, and we are weary with forbearing, and cannot stay."

It is a *Power of Realization.* Wherever the word of God comes, though there is no scale of its success, it is more or less, sooner or later, surrounded by something like itself. It is not dormant, inoperative, but quick and powerful. It provokes attention, circulates enquiry, compels to take a part. It affects strongly and vividly. It arouses every earnest feeling. It substantiates its own truths and places them in a distinct perceptibleness. It tells of the coming of Christ in the flesh, but though that was only to one land and at one time, it surrounds it with such interest to all lands and all times, that it may be said indifferently and universally: "He came and preached peace to you who were afar and to them that are nigh." It tells of the death of Christ, but though this was once for all, and was confined to a particular region as its scene, yet is there no country and no age in which it may not be said, though the most remote: "Before whose eyes Christ hath been evidently set forth crucified among you." It realises God, and we "endure as

seeing Him who is invisible." It realises futurity, and "faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." In us is found every doctrine and blessing of the gospel in actual form and rudiment. Ours is a present salvation. We are justified. We are sanctified. We have power to become sons of God. There is the joy of salvation. We have peace with God. We do enter into rest. Now are we the sons of God. The work of grace bears its fruit. Faith groweth exceedingly. Love aboundeth more and more. Peace passeth all understanding. Patience hath its perfect work. This is, surely, Power: the kindling of a living light over the written word: the inward interpretation: the witness of the soul closing with it.

It is a *Power of Intuition.* Though man is grossly self-ignorant, and is incapable of a strict self-discernment, yet he knows when his principal moral features are described. He feels the truth when brought home to him, however it lay beyond his faculty of discovering it. And a peculiar interest of this kind inheres in Christianity. It is the perfect description of human nature. We see ourselves as in a glass. It turns this glass every way. Man's history is reflected from its surface, man's consciousness comes out upon its field. He gazes on a mysterious image which he recognises as his own. The Scripture hath not said in vain what evil lusteth in him. The thoughts of many hearts are revealed. The process is like a divination. The sinner stands confessed. He is individualised among millions. All is brought to light. He mourns apart. Thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest. He wonders at the detection and exposure: "Whence knowest thou me?" "Come, see a man which told me all things that ever I did." The sinner shrinks beneath the broad eye of omniscience, looking out upon him from the Scripture. He is condemned already. He sees that his secret sins are set in the light of God's

countenance. Artifice and dissimulation no more avail him. He feels the folly of any further trifling. All the charge is proved. He is bound hand and foot. The commandment has come. Sin revives. Sin slays him. He dies. Is not this superhuman? What other religion thus reads the volume of our nature, and the no less difficult volume of our heart? This is power.

It is a *Power of Relief.* With royal liberality Christianity makes full provision for all the wants of all. It is a rich and infinite grant of pardon and sanctification. There is no escape nor exemption which the sinner needs, but it secures. There is no remorse nor shame which he suffers, but it soothes. It is a feast of fat things for the hungry. It is a fountain of life to the thirsty. It is a wardrobe of sumptuous garments for the naked. But there is in our nature more of want than sin can adequately express, though it is that which sin has caused and embittered. It lies in certain achings and cravings of the heart. Man is imaginative, and he is surrounded by mystery. He is loving, and he is surrounded by attraction. He looks beyond himself for hold and rest. But he is mocked wheresoever he directs his cry. "Man knoweth not the price thereof; neither is it found in the land of the living. The depth saith, It is not in me: and the sea saith, It is not with me. It cannot be valued with the gold of Ophir, with the precious onyx or the sapphire." What a weariness lies upon the human spirit! How is it pierced with disappointment and baffled by failure! What would it be! And this often seems only its self-uplifting to an original law. The wing is matted, is broken, but it was made to soar, and as it flutters we mark the native instinct and the deprived strength. But the religion of Jesus Christ takes up the wretched creature at his last gasp of conflict and despair. It seeks him when shunned of all. It honours him when disdained of all. It pities him when despised of all. It cherishes him when denounced

of all. It draws out a thousand hidden, but hitherto unmeasured, emotions. It gains his attention. It begets his confidence. He has caught a sound of sympathy. He looks up. Hope quickens in his eye. His whole heart is fixed. He finds rest unto his soul. The gospel awakens and employs and explains all his innermost feelings. He would not now part with one, for each is turned to an account of happiness. Satisfactions enter by the avenue of former discontents and depressions. There is nothing too vigorous for the strength of that gospel to confirm. There is nothing too ambitious for its sublimity to indulge. There is nothing too indefinite for its wisdom to ascertain. There is nothing too tender for its compassion to encourage. There is nothing too awful for its sanctity to deepen. There is nothing too capacious for its greatness to enlarge. It goes down into that depth, searchless to all but itself,—the human soul,—and satisfies its wants and fulfils its yearnings. It treats man with deference, with honour, as an immortal. It takes away the ignorance of the present and the vagueness of the future. It bids the immortal rise and claim his crown. It shows such knowledge of man in his most secret springs and most unconscious encitements, that man cheerfully commits himself and all his ways to its control: finds that though until now he was trifled with, and was made sport of, he at last is understood, respected, and retrieved! That which can do this must be Power!

It is a *Power of Exemplification.* That which cometh from above, a kingdom which has descended from heaven and bears with it celestial adjuncts, cannot be wanting in ample and striking proof. Sign and wonder will attest it. But there is the accompaniment of a still more decisive corroboration. The argument is experimental. A change has ever been going on in countless minds which science, legislation, moral suasion, never could achieve. We have seen the peace which has followed the furies of remorse.

We have seen contrition take the place of obduracy and pollution. We have seen the broken heart made whole, the bleeding spirit healed. We have seen hope as it smiled, and listened as it sung, and rejoiced as it soared, unchecked by the pains and infirmities of our dull mortality. We have seen principle, matchless principle,—principle stemming the rudest shock, victorious over the fiercest hostility,—stronger than death. Yet such was the pledge and condition of Christianity. Such was the "doctrine" of its Founder: "his word was with power." It rested its truth upon these effects. They are accomplished. It is therefore confirmed. They are unrivalled. It is therefore glorified. Its words are established as those of truth and soberness. No expectation is deceived. No promise is belied. It *is* in power, and the power has never failed it.

It is a *Power of Absorption.* We know what man wants. He wants a religion. Wearying himself in the greatness of his way, he needs a guide, a hope, a satisfaction. He asks both for antidote and good. In vain he looks for this to the hills, or in himself. He can be interested in nothing short of this. This is the whole of man, the whole of his dearth, and the whole of his well-being. Christianity supplies this information. It meets man the creature, the sinner, the candidate of immortality. It takes hold of his soul, occupies and engrosses it. It is not the reserve, the exception: it is primary and paramount. It comes with a vast impression. Such were the first Christians when "the people magnified them." What gave their virtues this loveliness and lustre? Their "singleness of heart." All moved in them; and therefore all moved beyond them. "The love of Christ constrained them." The Christian principle, like a seed germinant, pervaded and modified the surrounding soil: like the leaven, it assimilated the mass into which it was thrown: like the force of life, it went throbbing through

the frame in which it was seated. This is the secret of strength. Intentness and concentration alone can carry any true and noble cause to its triumph. What crowned primæval Christianity, under God, with its most intelligible success? These were the standard sentiments, and these are the sufficient explanations: "This one thing I do. For to me to live is Christ. I am ready to die for the Lord Jesus. Whether we be beside ourselves, it is to God: or whether we be sober, it is for your cause. We are changed into the same image. Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God."—Was not this to loose themselves in their high calling and glorious enterprise? Were they not of undivided heart and unwavering purpose? Did they not exist as in this abstraction? Did not this noble enthusiasm of zeal eat them up? Their one-mindedness gave them a dint which nothing could oppose. Whatever they did they did heartily to the Lord, they did it with their might, and hence their *power*.

It is a *Power of Courage*. Christianity is the parent and nurse of the true heroic. It is great and it excites greatness. It knows not of the dauntless in vulgar strifes and pigmy competitions. But it can raise the soul to a nobler pitch, the firmness of endurance. Its language is to reiteration, Be strong. It affects the valueness of no good. It makes still more tenderly precious whatever belongs to life. It hallows life beyond all gift save immortality, yea as a portion and the vestibule of it. Yet it trains us to hardness; to the sacrifice of life when higher interests are at stake. And this is achieved by no rude boisterous contempt of it, but by showing that something is left to it, and is committed to it, more sacred than itself.—A fair fame is the choicest inheritance of the elevated soul. It is sensitive to it. Religion lends it a very chasteness. And yet must we, in carrying on the kingdom of God, suffer reproach. The shame, it is true,

answers to nothing within. But it is anguish to be despised, to be disparaged, to be suspected, whatever is the answer of our conscience. Still we rejoice that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for the name of Christ. We take pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake; for when we are weak, then are we strong. Pusillanimity may be too natural to us, but it belongs not to our cause. True to it, we faint not. All is firmness, valour,—it is *power*.

It is the *Power of Support*. Afflictions are not held back from the Christian: some circumstances render those which are common only more poignant. But none can befall him which bring not with them a solace. Strong consolation only feebly expresses his support. He glories in tribulation. He is more than a conqueror. He always triumphs in Christ Jesus. Death trembles before him, gives way to his approach, shrinks beneath his touch, and expires at his feet. We are partakers of the afflictions of the gospel according to the power of God.

It is the *Power of Influence*. The gospel clothes its believers with an incalculable ascendency. It is impossible to limit their power of doing good. One act runs out into an endless progression. Like the ocean-wave it ever renews itself, and rolls onward to the farthest shore. We live for all earthly space, for all future time, for the two worlds of spirits. What is "the power of the tongue?" "A word spoken in due season, how good is it!" Who can measure the usefulness of a thought? All the forests might have sprung from a solitary seed. A man may have thus given him power over the nations. Who can measure the efficacy of a prayer? If but a tear, it is imperishably preserved and individuated among the sumless drops of that bottle into which it glides: if but a sigh, it finds its way to the golden censer, and is instantly offered up with its much incense, and ascends with the smoke of its sweet odour, before God. While

we need every day a deeper humiliation of spirit, we equally need the nobleness of self-respect. It is not humility, the true poorness in spirit, which stands idle in the market-place, which buries its talent in the earth; the devout disposition feels high honour in its responsibility, obeys with promptitude every summons, and magnifies each office entrusted to it. O were we in the spirit of cheerful submission to duty, of unquestioning faith on promise! Did we stand up to our opportunities! Had we plied fully our means! How would the visions and allegories of prophecy take a palpable form, and the new heavens and the new earth canopy and gird us round, the glorious sunlight of which is their righteousness.

It is the *Power of Diffusion.* Christianity, though not indifferent to its administration, is independent of it. It is light and beauty and inherent excellence. When there are none to exhibit it, it is not therefore concealed; but like a precious stone is revealed by its own brilliancy. When there are none to prove it, it is not therefore undefended; but like a great law of nature unfolds itself. For any men, or class of men, to describe their ministry as necessary to give efficiency to the doctrines of the gospel, is to place themselves between God and man. They usurp a Mediator's part. They dispense or they withhold. They bind or loose. They lock or open. In vain the herald-cry of mercy: "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely,"—they stand by the margin of the fountain to permit or interdict, nor suffer a drop, but as it is first drawn into their vessels, to pass the most parched lip. In vain the blessed announcement: "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world,"—they surround the cross, allowing or not allowing the sinner's eye to rest upon it, and then only through their own prism. In vain the most encouraging overture, the most winning plea:

"Him that cometh unto me I will in nowise cast out,"—they make way, or offer obstruction, to the comer, and assume the right to cast out in any wise they dictate. In vain the blood of Christ bids the sinner near,—they keep custody of it. In vain the Holy Ghost saith: "To-day if ye will hear my voice,"—they impiously undertake whether He shall be heard or not. Such was not the religion of Christ. It was wrapt in no mystery, preached with no reserve,—it was suspended on no circumstances, restricted to no purveyors. It was free as the winds of heaven. Like the rain it fell on all. As the sunbeam it flew direct whatever would intercept it. It claimed enlargement. It spurned repression. It panted for the onset. It shouted for the victory. It was in an insatiable *power*.

There is the deep, vehement, life in the gospel. It wills to speak, to be felt to be obeyed. It would be glorified. It is not coldly contemplative and dispassionately placid. We see, indeed, that it is too often thus misconceived. Its life is crushed out of it. Even then it still exhibits its genius. It shows what it ought to be. A likeness of power is retained. Moveless, dead,—it yet stands forth in a seeming of action. Fixed, rigid,—there is yet a monumental resemblance. All trace of its vitality and warmth and activity cannot be obliterated. Its nature struggles through. Thus in the noble sculptures of the ancient art, the figure is caught in the moment of its fullest expression, the attitude is seized in its most sublime energy; and though the material of the form is insensate,—an idea, a feeling, is developed,—a bearing goes beyond,—the wrestler, the king, the god, might have been turned into this stone amid the very drawing of their breath and very sway of their gesture.

In Christianity there is nothing sluggish and inert, nothing cold and narrow, but all is glowing, intense, stirring, and expansive. It is a lively hope. It is the

light of life. It is life unto life. Its are lively oracles. Its are the words of eternal life. In it is the life of our spirit. We are born again through it. We are clean by it. We are sanctified by it. It is the glorious gospel. There is nothing enervate, compromising, supine in it: it is strong by a divine hand, and is quickened by a divine sensibility. It is made for large effects. What rock can resist this hammer? Is it not a fire? It is perfect, converting the soul. Whatever of decay may moulder around it, whatever of death may sleep at its side, it liveth and abideth for ever. The kingdom of God is in *Power!*

Nor is any of its power dissipated and lost. It has sunk into no desuetude, it lies in no abeyance. It decayeth not nor waxeth old. It cannot be shaken but remains. It is the present truth. It is in Jesus. Ages have left it in no exhaustion, stripped it of no authority, shorn it of no strength. It renews a perpetual youth. It is living water still. Every thing lives whither this river cometh. It has done nothing which it cannot do again. From no encounter does its bow turn back, or its sword return empty. From no battle-field does it come off without a yet fairer garland and a greener wreath. It has long since mated all, vanquished all, and the "world cannot withstand its ancient conqueror."

This is the true Christianity, coming into contact with the soul of men, not as a soul-less speculation, but full of point and warning and pity, awakening the soul into an attention and interest most becoming its rank and destiny, if the message which now reaches it be true. Witnessed and enlightened by the Holy Ghost, the Gospel appears what it never seemed before. There might have been a cold conception of it. The living reality was not understood. It was nature's wintry scene, the frost-bound landscape, each leaf rigid, each drop congealed. The vernal breath has penetrated that death-like shroud, and

now the branches wave in their verdure, the flowers expand in their fragrance, the streams murmur in their music: all is the freedom of motion, the fulness of instinct, the holiday of joy.

How evidently wrong and inconsistent does this view of Christianity prove them to be whose notion and practice of it carry them no further than its external observances and forms! A ritualism contents them. In it they find their satisfaction and expiation. They revolve in a circle of minute and superficial ceremonies. It is the bodily exercise which profiteth little. They serve not God with their spirit in the gospel of his Son. "The people draw near to Him with their mouths, and with their lips do honour him, but have removed their heart far from him." "They have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof." Let these learn that the experience of the gospel is transcendently more than name and symbol: let them marvel no longer that they must be born again! Truth must be in the inward parts!

They who are conscious of religious declension are loudly rebuked if this be the true Christianity! They did run well. What carefulness it wrought in them! A spirit of slumber has fallen upon them. The things which remain are ready to die. They have left their first love. Where is the blessedness ye spake of? Return, ye backsliding children. Be filled with the Spirit. Seek the fervency of your earliest vows. Renew the beginning of your confidence. It was life from the dead. Your soul cannot be restored until your first cherished emotions shall be renewed: until the kingdom of God shall sway you with its authority, and bind you with its force. You must be once more the subject of aroused interest, of stimulated action; loving the Lord your God with all your mind and heart and strength; awakened to the designs of the gospel towards you and others; "appre-

hending that for which you are also apprehended of Christ Jesus."

The unconverted should be afraid. To stand in any approximation to this kingdom and to fail of its blessings, supposes the most heinous guilt and most tremendous exclusion. It is a perilous thing to trifle with it. It is charged with a power, it is endued with a readiness, to revenge all disobedience. It is not indifferent. It endures not neutrality. It brooks not coldness. The King has sent forth a glorious bidding to the royal feast: "As many as ye find, bid to the marriage." But He must be wroth with them who make light of the overture or scorn of the banquet. Bow the knee. Kiss the sceptre. Accept the clemency. Receive the robe. Fill the chamber. Crowd the board. Eat and drink at His table in His kingdom. O may ye feel the power in which this kingdom marches on; it a power to subdue all things,—a power to raise the dead!

What a contrast is this Kingdom with its mysterious might to Infidelity! That is cold, jejune, lifeless. It is a thing of negations. It has a torpedo touch. It is a death. It sweeps along like a blast of ice. It inspires nothing of lofty sentiment, it urges to nothing of generous movement. It petrifies all into rigour, selfishness, and hate. The gospel breathes only life, impels only benevolence, speaks only good-will to men. It is the power of a universal blessing.

And we may thank God with every grateful acknowledgment, and congratulate ourselves with every cheerful auspice, that all Christians are beginning to see Christianity in this power of its truth and life. One greater than Elias is among us restoring all things. He sitteth as a refiner. The external form no longer satisfies, but men dive in its inmost spirit. Missions instrumentally have given health to its heart and caused it to beat with its earliest pulsations. They have laid open the essence and the hidden

life. They have given back to the world the glow of the ancient faith. They have urged mighty movements in return. The power which is disimprisoned demands our own advance. It was, it is, the momentum, of far-spread operations. It still asks, it still necessitates, ample room and verge. The tree must not be bent down upon its root. The river must not be repelled upon its source. This power is fed by diffusion. Our life is in this zeal. Be ours the inwrought fervent prayer. Be ours the unutterable groan. Activity is our strength. And in the experience of the virtue of our principles, in the overflow of our joys, in the liberality of our sacrifices for the extension of the gospel,—our highest department of labour, our noblest reward of service,—may we receive a "second benefit," a renewed baptism of this holy, benign, and tender Power,—power which breathes in every doctrine, moves in every duty, expands in every principle, of the Christian system,—power which distinguishes it from every human scheme, "teaching as one having authority,"—power averse from all indifference and abhorrent from all insensibility,—power, dread, tender,—power all-pervading and all-assimilating,—power piercing as the lightning and distilling as the dew,—like the living Soul to the Body which it vivifies and directs,—like the Shechinah to the Temple, suffusing the vail with its light and thrilling the altar with its vibration!

SERMON IV.

THE RIGHT OF THE POOR.

MATT. xi. 5.

AND THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THEM.

IT is the master-piece of political science to bend every scheme of the enemy into the means of establishing the safety, confirming the institutions, and augmenting the resources, of the nation which he attacks: to direct the storm which he has awakened in such a manner that, while its fury shall fall upon him, it shall serve to root and consolidate the strength which he would overthrow. So to frustrate hostile intentions as to extract from them the instruments of defence and the occasions of glory, entitles the statesman to the highest praise.

It is the distinguishing art of military tactics to profit instantaneously by the mistakes of the opposite force, to throw it into confusion, to bring it under its own artillery, to break its line by its own ranks. The greatest victories ever won sprung from such stratagem, from sudden suggestions formed on sudden disasters;—a weakness in the centre or in the extremes, an error in the position, has been seized in a moment, the meditated plan of the conflict has been cast aside, more able dispositions have been superseded, for the foe was self-destroyed.

It is a triumph of logic and not an ignoble one,—since its merit is rather to convict error than to determine truth,—when we can press an opponent on the gound of

his own concessions, and can snatch the argument from his ill-disciplined grasp. Our cause thus requires no vindication: it is signalized by the failure of every attempt against it.

The sneer has long been turned against Christianity that it is the religion of the poor. This is supposed to be its brand of shame. But it is no recent detection of this characteristic, if it be adduced to discredit it in our age. In a remote antiquity it was for this very peculiarity derided and denounced. And however early the charge, the self-avowal was earlier still. The text is the confession of our religion. It bespeaks the fact. It anticipates any challenge on this account. It betrays no distrust, on this showing, of its excellence: it sees, in this anticipation, no compromise of its operation. It hides it not, it subdues it not, it excuses it not. It boasts of it. It glories in it. It wears the inscription as a frontlet on its most open, fearless, brow: it loves that this distinction should beam from it as the most effulgent mark of its divinity.

It would seem that, from the relentless treatment and severe imprisonment of John the Baptist, some of his disciples began not only to suspect his claims, but those of Jesus to whom he had borne testimony. To satisfy their doubts and resolve their embarrassments, he sent them at once to Him. Surely he needed, he sought, no assurance to confirm his own belief. He who had beheld the palpable descent of the Holy Ghost by the banks of Jordan, who had heard the voice which came from heaven, who had witnessed that awful inauguration of the "Beloved Son," could not have been visited by the most passing doubt. This is the answer, formally addressed to His precursor, but substantively intended for those who had conveyed the question. It is an appeal to what they have seen. It was the argument of his transcendent credentials. "Saw ye the seared eye-ball rolling in its socket? endeavouring to express a meaning and catch a sunbeam,

but in vain? Mark now that once disfeatured countenance, the illumination of fair beauty and mental power playing there,—the mind's purest thought, the heart's warmest feeling, gleaming, dissolving, in that new-kindled orb! Saw ye the cripple, heaving himself from his dreary pallet, crawling forth to breathe the refreshing air, and to beg by the way-side? helpless, wan, with down-cast countenance, and, when spurned by the passenger, shrinking into himself? Mark now that ruddy cheek, that uplifted form, that bounding step! Saw ye the wretched leper that writhed in loathsomeness and anguish, flinging himself across my path to arrest my course and force my pity? each lineament distorted, each member wrung, his breath infection, his look horror, his voice despair,—what man bent on the lazar one notice of pity or spake to him one cheering word? Mark that renovated figure, the frightful crust has fallen from him, the living death has fled, the human visage reappears, and his flesh has come again like that of a little child! Saw ye him who was shut out from every sound of pathos, encouragement and hope? who never heard a mother's blessing or a sister's lay? for whom bird never chirped, nor brook murmured, nor woodland sighed, nor soft æolian pulsings of the summer eve awoke? That ear is now unstopped. First it heard my voice. Through all its chambers those accents gently swelled. Now it drinks in each household word, each friendly tone, each natural harmony, each temple strain! Saw ye the newly-rescued from the grave? him on whom a strange solemnity still rests, while the present is as future and the future is as present, mingled with serious contrasts, in his memory? him whom I tore as the prey from the mighty? him from about whom the cerements suddenly unwound themselves, when corruption had begun its havoc and the worm called for him? him whom I gave back from the grave to all the charms of earth, the pleasures of friendship, the instincts of life? Ye see him

following me, as in a train of captives delivered from the dread power which only I can loose. But this in itself were small. These are physical ills. My miracles have triumphed over them. But there is a proof more legible, more convincing, more demonstrative, than all these achievements, even when combined. My message is to the most destitute. My business is with the most miserable. I am anointed to preach the gospel to the poor. Already is the work commenced. The common people hear me gladly. The poor have the gospel preached to them."

This is a familiar and oft-repeated announcement. We may wonder at the stress laid upon it. Though we may not think scorn of it, may not see in it any stigma, it will possibly fail to impress us as an excellence. We perhaps have felt astonished that it is made so prominent. We do not, it may be supposed, perceive the conclusiveness of such a suffrage for Christianity. Is the splendour of all signs and wonders, of powers which control the invisible, spiritual, world,—to fade before, not a particular dispensation of truth, but before the aspect of that dispensation towards a particular class of mankind? To understand this aright,—we must transport ourselves to the age in which this averment was spoken and to the circumstances of human society in which it was first heard. Then it sounded forth a stupendous novelty. There was no precedent for it. It fell in with no prepossession. It was a solitary principle and fact. He who "spake as never man spake," stood alone in asserting it.

I. Let us state the sentiment of the text.

We understand it to intend literally the poor: the poor in condition and not the poor in spirit. These constitute the chief mass of society, the great bulk of mankind. Wherever civilization and high refinement exist, there is seen this unequal distribution of rich and indigent. It is easily explained that the poor cannot cease out of the land, and that they must form the excess of any such

population. For power, should it be even universal in its source, must be deposited in a very small executive. That governing portion of the community will be selected for its wealth, or find in their exalted position the means of its augmentation. There seems a very law by which secular possessions impropriate and combine in fewer and yet fewer hands. Though pauperism be no necessary consequence of civil arrangement, unless as the accident of orphanage and decrepitude, still we cannot conceive of that state of things in which some shall not be discovered most needy and depressed. Improvidence and vice are sufficient causes of penury. But the requirements of property create the industrious poor. As the "king is served by the field," these will always outnumber the affluent who employ them. Sumptuary codes only disguise what they suppose, the disparity of means. The equality of earthly substance is an empty dream. An agrarian division would not secure it. Were each inheritance inalienable, other methods of coercion and compromise, transfer and exchange, would be found. The level would be speedily broken up. When the human mind has ceased to present distinctive modifications, and has yielded to an utter monotony, then, acquisition having the same aim and contentment the same measure, the dwellers upon earth may rear their houses after one pattern, and walk in one course of life. It would require a miracle to secure the effect,—a Manna from heaven, that none might have anything "over," and that none might have any "lack."

Poverty, then, indicates that large proportion of our species which is engaged in humble avocations and which commonly presses hard upon the limits of subsistence. Its state involves no crime, no disgrace. It is a natural subsidence, an hereditary lot. Though its temptations are great and its restrictions painful, it generally embraces the greatest number of the pious and the good, and is

illustrated by the noblest order of excellence and virtue. The text implies not only the intention that the gospel shall be preached to the poor, but that they have always, when so preached, been its truest subjects and brightest examples.

We understand the gospel to be that blessed scheme of mercy which,—proceeding on the assumed basis that man has totally apostatised from God and holiness, and that he is consequently exposed to the penalties of a broken law, and disqualified for any good, — reveals Messiah's obedience unto the death of the cross, his infinitely meritorious and efficacious sacrifice, as the ground of the sinner's pardon and acceptance,—a sacrifice thus accounted because of his essential Divinity and his Covenant appointment: that blessed scheme which alike secures the agency of the Lord the Spirit, to convince, to regenerate, to sanctify, to sustain. "And whatsoever things it saith, they may be included under these things."

—The Gospel is not preached to the poor in order to mix itself with the question of civil distinctions. There are those who seem to think it has none other design. They only commend it as a principle and rule of subordination. It is no beauty and comeliness in their eye that it really elevates the children of want. They esteem it so far merely as it may be made to break their spirit and perpetuate their serfdom. They fear the habit of enquiry and the power of thought. They speak of their depressed fellow-creatures as born for labour, doomed to subserviency, the fated instruments of their convenience and ease. They compare them to the feet of clay on which the social colossus stands. Now assuredly the gospel has no sympathy with these cruel views. It binds no chain upon humble life. It brands the poor to no endless degradation. This is a condition which it finds. Such condition grows out of causes with

which it has nothing to do. It comes to heal, to allay, to soothe. Wherever it appears, it gives understanding to the simple and refines the manners of the rude. It excites to thought, and favours investigation into the reason of things. It does, indeed, give the highest sanction to government as necessary to all society. It declares it to be of God, that is,—it is most agreeable to his will. But it is as much a message to the ruler as to the subject. It prescribes their correlative positions and duties, regulates between power and weakness, magistrature and submission. It inspires law with justice, and attempers authority with moderation. It is pre-eminently the guardian of those who are commonly trampled under foot and trodden to the dust: the helper of the helpless, the defence of the defenceless. "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord: I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him."

—It is not that the gospel regards social distinctions as chiefly important. They have a use which is not to be lightly valued. They bind the community by mutual interests and reciprocal obligations. But when it meditates man, it is in a more solemn aspect. It surveys his race in a wide generalization. "Hear, this, all ye people: give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world, both low and high: rich and poor together." The varieties of civil condition disappear before its sublime impartiality. "Surely men of low degree are vanity, and men of high degree are a lie." It merges all into the accountable and immortal being. That being is a sinner. Each needs the same salvation. The same light of mercy and hope must visit the cottage and the court, and it is to the same Cross that the peasant and the prince must bow.

—It is not that the gospel takes the same view of these respective classifications which we are accustomed to entertain. It does not speak of opulence in the flattering

manner, or of necessity in that deprecatory style, which are general among ourselves. It describes the favour of the one as small, and the disadvantages of the other as inconsiderable. With riches it couples "deceitfulness," "uncertainty," "cares," and "many hurtful lusts." With poverty it identifies meekness and humility and contentment and quiet: the equality established by the Maker of all: the preference of Him who had not where to lay his head. "How hardly," is its warning, "shall a rich man enter into the kingdom of God!" "Blessed,"—this is its solace, "be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God!"

—It is not that the gospel is merely adapted to the humble spheres and employments of life. The honour is not small, and the power cannot be feeble, that cheers and irradiates the abodes which famine often threatens and which pride disdains. The hovel has received its glad tidings, and has proved that "godliness with contentment is great gain." Its tendency is assuredly to raise the social state of the poor. But it does far more. It conquers sullenness, it dissuades despair. Still it is the religion for universal man. There is nothing in it which limits its operation to a single order of society. It stems the pride of wealth, curbs the lust of ambition, exposes the snare of greatness, sobers the delirium of power: it teaches the noble to walk in safety on his dizzy height, instructs the senator, counsels the statesman, and sits with kings upon their thrones. Nothing is beyond its reach. Its amiableness turns it mainly to those whom men despise: its sway lies equally upon the towers of the mighty and the palaces of the proud.

—It is not that the gospel is unworthy the attention of the most educated minds. The measure of knowledge which the poor can obtain, the habit of thinking which they can acquire, must be subject to painful restrictions. Science and literature can be little cultivated by "man going forth unto his work, and to his labour until the

evening." But is the contracted and uninformed mind favourable to the reception of Christianity? Is there wisdom in the philosopher and literate which may look down upon it? The most soaring intellect, the most noble genius, may here expatiate with delight. Taste may find in its purest sensibility, knowledge its largest field, imagination its richest banquet. It knows no war with learning. It offers no insult to improvement. It lives in light, it trusts in truth, it consists in conviction. Doctrines which infinite wisdom reflects upon the soul of man,—the wisdom of God,—need not fear to stand at the tribunal of the strictest scrutiny, nor to abide the ordeal of the amplest erudition. And yet we are prepared to expect from "the seat of the scornful" the inuendo that the gospel is preached to the poor! because it is only compatible with their understanding and levelled to their prepossession. We repudiate the charge. That which is the fairest illumination from the Father of lights, that into which the angels desire to look, that which is the glorious gospel of the blessed God, can receive no honour from men. And it may still be remembered, though we do not make boast of it, that the wisest and greatest of our race have paid their homage to it. They were not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. They did not detect the cheat. They did not loathe the meanness. They spoke of no prostration but that of reverence before it. They felt its grandeur and their soul rose with it. To them it proposed no sacrifice save the labour to explore it. Instead of requiring them to stoop, they gazed upward on its awful elevation. Knowledge and letters owe to it every obligation. It alone has maintained the activity of the human mind, and preserved its most precious fruits. All the lights which cheer our earth it alone has screened from extinction. What imagination may not here find its flight? What talent its scope? What research its repayment? "Is it because there is not a God in Israel

that thou sendest to the God of Ekron?" But if men, "spoiled through philosophy and vain deceit," will refuse to share the gospel with the poor, if they insist on a revelation exclusive and flattering, if their pride be revolted at any thing in common with the vulgar whom they despise,—then can we only, like our Lord and Saviour, rejoice in spirit and say, "We thank thee, O Father, that thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes: even so, for so it seemed good in thy sight."

The fact is then undenied. "What shall one answer the messenger of the nation? That the Lord hath founded Zion, and the poor of his people shall trust in it." "Ye see your calling, that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called." "Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?" Since it is not true that the preaching of the gospel is confined to the poor, the meaning of the text must be, that it does not, like other systems, exclude them, and that it possesses a peculiar adaptation, and evinces as peculiar a condescension, for their state. It is preached to all, but these find peculiar favour in its comprehension, and peculiar redress in its pity.

The announcement is, then, not only declarative but predictive. It is something which shall continue to be, —not only that which was true of the Saviour's personal ministry, but that which shall be the distinctive glory of the gospel until the end come. It is prophetic, also, not only of this continued proclamation, but of its perpetual influence over the minds of this large section of the human family. "The humble shall hear thereof and be glad."

And so has it come to pass. The majority of the Christian fellowship has often consisted of a "poor and an afflicted people." It has been "the congregation of

the poor." Instead of exciting regret, this fact has been most propitious. The church, which does not obtain from this source its main accessions, fails of its most attractive influence and edifying strength. These are the most "lively stones" of the "spiritual house." These simple communities are known by a charm of simplicity and a force of usefulness which richer assemblies too rarely display. "Their deep poverty aboundeth to the riches of their liberality." The pastor, who is not favoured with this form of ministerial success, may fear that in some manner or other he has "offended these little ones," that he has treated those whom the gospel prefers in honour with slight and disrespect. How the prophet describes, as the constant attendants on his instructions, "the poor of the flock that waited upon me!" It was Christianity which first distinctly recognised our humble fellow-creatures as a class. They were before overlooked and disowned. When it saw the multitude, it had compassion upon them. All its most vital manifestations have denoted the same spirit. The apostles were the friends of the poor, and by experience shared their woes. They lifted up the mass of every nation which they visited, and sought them out for whom no others cared. Whenever the gospel has awaked from lethargy and emerged from corruption,—when it has looked forth as it did in its morning covered with the dew of its youth, and has breathed as it did in the freshness of its prime,—it has renewed this distinction. It has won its ancient trophies in its ancient field. It has gone from cabin to cabin, raised the drooping head and sunken heart, spoke words of kindness to them to whom the sound was new, and biddings of hope to them to whom such a futurity was strange. That great event which hurled from his baleful tyranny the Man of sin in this and other realms, was, whatever may have been its other phases and workings, the rescue of the poor from their religious oppressions and the re-

covery of their religious rights. The popular mind, the popular conscience, was then disenthralled. The grand immunities of the many were vindicated. The gospel was preached to the poor: it was the cause and the effect of this great deliverance! Those later Revivals of religion, which our eyes have seen, have exhibited this original feature and elicited this original power. The tillers of the soil, the prisoners of the mine, the mariners of the coast, the craftsman, the hind,—were the earliest confessors of the awakening visitation. They were "compelled to come in:" "the poor and the maimed and the halt and the blind:" "from the highways and hedges." They caught the holy flame. They were the first depositaries of an influence which presently rose to the highest summits of society and penetrated all its frame! Christian Missions have borne the same stamp of this earliest property of the gospel. They have dived into the abysses of the most degraded humanity. They have generously preferred its rudest and most vicious forms. They have "gone after" the sheep which have most widely and deviously strayed. In Africa they have not sought the Numidian in his warlike gear or the Angolan in his jewelled carcanet: not the lovely village or gold-domed city: but the predatory Caffre and the brutal Hottentot: the kraal and the burrow. In Asia they have not emulated the castes of blood and rank: they have not aspired to the thrones of imperial magnificence and gorgeousness: but the Pariah and the Soudra: the hut of the swamp and the cavern of the hill. Show us our nature's most unhappy varieties, its most degraded specimens, its most disastrous circumstances; and you but delight the ambition of the gospel by furnishing proofs of its power, and theatres for its benevolence!

II. THE REASONS FOR THIS FACT NOW MUST BE ASSIGNED.

It would be most unrighteous to fix on the poor the charge of ignorance and rudeness as the invariable accom-

paniments of their state. Ignorance as opposed to systematic education, rudeness as opposed to conventional manner, may indeed be truly affirmed of them: it is their hard necessity. These advantages are denied to their means and their station. But knowledge may exist without education and refinement without address. Mind sometimes shoots up with a spontaneous luxuriance, and elegance often wears none other than a native robe. Still it is not scorn,—it is commiseration which grieves to be convinced that poverty is commonly associated with ignorance and rudeness. This must be expected. Least of all is it the fault of those who suffer it in these its natural consequences. So, though wealth is not the necessary voucher of education and refinement, it is their most easy presumption and most common test. Speaking, then, of things in their general bearing, we must regard poverty in its circumstances, not of moral inferiority, but of incidental depression. One more exception may be made: wealth may be meek, poverty may be haughty: wealth may be contented, poverty may be covetous: but this is not probable tendency nor ordinary association. Why is the Gospel, then, especially preached to the poor?

1. *To demonstrate the Divine Independence.*

We are dazzled with external distinctions. Man looketh on the outward appearances. Birth, hereditary honour, fortune, strongly impress us. However envious we may be of them who are foremost in the race of life,—of them on whom these guerdons are accumulated,—our nature has always been obsequious in their admission. It is not our purpose to decry them as they may affect the order of a community, or as they may excite the progress of man. But they must be little to the eye of Him who looketh upon the heart. Careth he for the painted toy, the passing pageant? What is man? The atom, lording it over his kindred dust! The clay, striving with his fellow potsherd! The Lord on high disdains this pride

of life. "The Lord of hosts hath purposed to stain the pride of all glory, and to bring into contempt all the honourable of the earth." "He bringeth the princes to nothing; he maketh the judges of the earth as vanity." It is becoming His terrible majesty to treat the pretension of every creature, whose heart is lifted up in him, with this displeasure: to pour contempt on human ambition and aggrandisement: to know the proud afar off. Could he have respect to their schemes, or sympathy with their vanities? Equally does it agree with the majesty of His benevolence to rescue from oppression those who are set at nought by the claimants of power; to "rise for judgment to save the meek of the earth;" to "deliver the needy when he crieth, the poor also, and him that hath no helper;" to "prepare of his goodness for the poor." He not infrequently manifests his independence in his contrast of measures towards the earthly "small and great." "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree: He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away." And thus, also, He commonly selects for his instruments, in his operations among men, those who are little known to fame, little marked for greatness. He does not raise up the unqualified, but it is he who gives them unexpected qualifications. They are the last whom we should have pronounced the proper agents. But God is beheld working by them, and sometimes even in spite of them. He chooseth "the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; and base things of the world, and things which are despised, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things which are: *that no flesh should glory in his presence.*"

2. *To explain the apparent Inequalities of Providence.*

That in the Divine government of our earth and race there are numerous occasions of difficulty and grounds of

suspense, have been felt by all who have marked its administration. Our survey of it is sectional, not complete. We, in order to "consider wisely of its doings," must include the future as well as the present, the spiritual as well as the sensible. We behold but one buttress of the building: we contemplate but the revolution of the wheel that sets thousands, which are invisible, in motion. This may well make us pause. There is a mighty countercheck, behind all that we can observe, to our actual judgments and impressions. And beneath the light of eternity, dim as is the beam which is thrown across the present evil world, the relations of social life become suddenly transposed. Riches corrupt, honours fade, "joy is withered away from the sons of men." Why, we have asked, are such large portions of the human household denied its banquet to gather but its crumbs? Why are they called to endure such nameless inflictions and rigours? We see an infinitely beneficent reparation. Theirs are durable riches! Theirs are unperishing honours! Theirs are unsating delights! The wonder now is changed. A higher sovereignty interposes. We are tempted to ask, Why the poor should be thus preferred in all real and substantial good? Why they should be thus distinguished above "the children of this world?" Why the great and wealthy should have so mean a fragment dealt them? Why they should be abandoned to good things in their life-time with the reversion of beggary for ever? But while the government of God is vindicated, the old perplexity is but reversed. No longer are we envious of the foolish when we see the prosperity of the wicked. "These are the ungodly who prosper in the world: they increase in riches." We "see their end." "Surely Thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction." Poverty is, then, the real favourite of heaven. It is the disguise of royalty on the way to its throne. It is the assay of the gold only

momentarily hiding the purity which it elicits. It is the emersion of the sun from the eclipse. "For the needy shall not always be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever."

3. *To establish the Necessity of a Divine Revelation.*

Many a system of superstitious and philosophised religion existed at that period. One had succeeded to another. Long time had been afforded for the probation of each and all. Every circumstance had been favourable to their success. The failure had been notable. The rich were unconvinced. The poor were unblessed. To this, the inconceivably larger, constituency of every commonwealth religion wore no benign smile, it brought no real benefit. It was another burden added to their oppressions, a new rivet in their chains. But there could be no more signal condemnation of a religion, no more certain disproof of its celestial origin, than its partiality and leaning towards select objects and departments of social life in contempt of the many. These were cut off from its sympathy. They were sheep having no shepherd. They perished for ever without any regarding it. No man cared for their soul. If religion was, then, the concern and weal of universal man, these systems did not contain it. There now arose another. It divulged its peculiarity as a message to the poor. This, surely, if that were a true profession, was a most desirable purpose. It was to do all that which preceding systems had notoriously come short of doing. It was to begin at the point of their defeat. It was to take up the precise matter of their abandonment and despair. But in this peculiarity it placed the interests and the stress of its revelation. It told of infinite benevolence as its source and motive. It courted not the learned and the puissant: it flattered not the crowd. But it did speak to all, and, therefore, mainly to the poor. Who had suggested this philanthropy? From what bosom flowed this sublime disinterestedness?

It was "the word which God sent, preaching peace by Jesus Christ." It was adapted to the wants of man at large. It took hold on the principles of his nature and the laws of his being. The Desire of all nations had come, and was hailed among them, while the solitary sage dreamed that a distant teacher might arise to clear away the mists which still hung round the light of truth. The song of the Christian assembly, with its strain of a lively hope and its burden of a glorious immortality, came wafting through the groves of Academe or the retreats of Tusculum, where the wisest and the best of the heathen only guessed that there might be another world. Their perplexity and their incompetency were made manifest: their authority had ceased for ever.

4. *To exhibit the true Importance of Man.*

In this turn and bearing of the Christian religion, man is divested of all that is accidental and adventitious. You see the poor,—the mere and naked man. Nothing is left him which raises him above his fellows. Of all he is most apparently abject. There is nothing to magnify him. Yet in the stature of his soul who is greater or who is less? Here he is beheld in his very essence, in his proper self. Clothe him with regal ensigns, and he is not aggrandised: cover him with the weeds of squalid poverty, and he is not reduced. And it seemed worthy of the gospel to lay open the proportions of human greatness with an entire disregard of circumstance, and in all the simplicities of genuine manhood. Down deep in that spirit are not deposited, but are generated, as in their native mine, riches true, durable, irredeemable. Nothing henceforth is seen worthy of notice in any individual, which is not worthy of it in every individual, of the species. "Ye are of more value," said our Saviour, "than many sparrows:" thus teaching us how reason, accountability, and immortal destiny transcend the animal existence. But there is not a man unpossessed of these

distinctions. "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted." And whenever we are tempted to slight the unrecorded million, let us remember that a nobler worth, that a more tremendous responsibility, cannot be attributed to them than is involved in this declaration, "to the poor is the gospel preached." They are interwoven with the witness-mark of Christianity. For this can be reasoned upon no exclusive advantage and recommendation, but only for the soul's sake, simply in regard of an immortal capability! "This is the whole of man." "The faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, has no respect of persons,"—the "gold ring," the "goodly apparel," the "gay clothing,"—it honours and peculiarly addresses "the poor man in vile raiment," throwing it only aside for the moment to reveal his spirit clad in the bright robes of an unearthly glory!

5. *To relieve the heaviest Severity of present Trouble.*

The gospel is "the tender mercy of our God." It is like Him that he should direct it where is found the most pressing strait and woe. Life knows its common calamities. From these no condition is exempt. But they admit of many aggravations. None can be conceived more embittering than want. It is the drop which makes the cup already full to overflow. It is the ninth wave of the already foaming sea. And if this religion can heal and medicate this direst ill, can soothe its suffering and cheer its gloom, it prefers the strongest title to our admiration. We see it following human wretchedness into its last and dreariest recesses, softening its pallet and sweetening its pittance, hushing its heaving sob and drying its gushing tear, quieting the sense of wrong and relieving the sullenness of desertion, taking up those whom father and mother have forsaken, causing the widow's heart to sing for joy, filling the narrow chamber where life breathes its last with angels, bearing the Lazarus into Jesu's bosom. It considereth the poor. As

it is the design of God to discover His character in the gospel,—to declare his righteousness, to show the exceeding riches of his grace,—so in its application to the poor He manifests his abhorrence of all misery, his desire of assuaging it, his determination to overcome it,—beginning at its fellest form and its most exasperating conflict; with that order of men who have never escaped even the letter of the earliest curse! He turns it even into good. He makes it the means of holy and paternal discipline. He sanctifies it to the devotion, and blesses it to the resignation, of those who suffer it, until they can describe themselves "as having nothing, and yet possessing all things."

6. *To unfold the true Genius of the Christian Faith.*

While the gospel is full of "testimonies which are wonderful" tasking the highest powers of the highest creatures,—its belief rests on other grounds, and is demanded by other considerations. Were it some laborious deduction, the poor would be precluded very generally from adopting it. It is a saying credible as the witness of God. The child becomes wise unto salvation. The way-faring cannot err therein. "The vision is written, and made plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." It is to be believed as the record which God has given of his Son. While it deserves and compensates the deepest research, simple guileless belief of the truth is all that is required. Obedience is the best auxiliary. "If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God." An experimental conviction follows, and the truth is confirmed by its inward effects. Every thing is simplified to the humblest capacity, there is a mighty condescension to men of low estate, faith is made to stand not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God, and he who is "small and despised," may consistently and intelligently be "ready to give an answer to every man that asketh him the reason of the hope that is in him." Learning could little aid him here. It might

confirm to him the authenticity of the testimony, it might explain for him the meaning of the text,—advantages not to be cheaply held,—but it would only leave him the same warrant of personal belief which he now possesses, that the gospel is the truth of God! The learned and the ignorant are placed precisely on the same level.

7. *To intimate the Spirituality of Christian Blessings and Rewards.*

They to whom the gospel was thus committed as well as preached still remained the poor. That burden was not taken from them. The statement is not affected by the influence of this religion upon the habits of order, moderation, and industry. This was an arrest upon the *degeneracy* which commonly belongs to poverty, but not more than any other system of practical virtue would prove. Christianity offered no temporal lure. It wrought no sudden enchantment. It changed nothing but the dispositions of the mind. For professing it, tens of thousands who had "this world's good," were stripped of their all. They were included in the most ruinous confiscations. They were strangers scattered abroad. They were torn from their homes: they were plundered of their inheritances. But so they understood the gospel. "They took joyfully the spoiling of their goods." They found in the cause of their sacrifice an indemnity of peace which passed all understanding, they imagined no recovery of their losses but felt in inward joy a hundred-fold reparation; the only treasure they anticipated was in heaven, their only reversion in eternity. Whether men were poor when it first addressed them, or became poor as soon as they received it, spiritual only was the blessing it brought, and spiritual alone was the equivalent it afforded.

8. *To place distinctly before us the Value of Predispositions in the Reception of Christianity.*

Although no guilt and depravity disqualify the sinner for the *grace* of the gospel, yet Scripture asserts and ex-

perience proves, as it is a system of probation as well as of grace, that the original form of character has much to do with its belief. The Spirit of faith acts upon that form of character. We have thus a right to speak of the *hopeful* in their state of mind, and of the *probable* in their likelihood of conversion. There are those who are not far from the kingdom of God. "Verily I say unto you, that the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God *before you.*" To say that the frivolous and the thoughtful, the ingenuous and the double-minded, the truthful and the insincere, the humble and the proud, are equally encouraging and discouraging characteristics in regard to the salvation of their subjects, is to contravene all those moral distinctions which a system of religion from heaven must most sensitively appreciate and most firmly defend. The question is not of *sovereign* mercy, what it has done, what it can do! It is the rule of *our* judgments. Is there a favourable condition of the human mind for the welcome of the gospel? One more so than another? Religious education has no utility if there be not. "Teaching men in all wisdom" promotes no saving end, if every opinion and feeling, however contrary to each other, equally subserve it. Why is the gospel preached to the poor? It is a recognition of this principle. The rich man's idol *may* be the poor man's dream. The mighty *may* be meek, the obscure *may* be imperious. There is a chamber of imagery in every human spirit along which the shadows of the remotest life and the most foreign scene *may* disport themselves. But we speak of men according to their large divisions, and according to the tempers which are common to those divisions. Now we generally find that they "that have riches" are they "that trust in riches." It is a natural tendency of man as he is, to make a boast of all his advantages,—the wise man to glory in his wisdom, the mighty man to glory in his might, the rich man to glory in his riches. All this is

very uncongenial to the gentleness and meekness of Christ. Among the poor we expect to discover the bruised in spirit, the broken in heart, unsophisticated mind, inartificial manner, susceptibility of kindness, willingness to learn, gratitude for all the confidence which may be reposed in them, each notice valued as a gift and each counsel regarded as a trust. Does not all this meet the gospel in its exquisiteness of mercy, urge the soul to close with it, and encircle it with the weary and heavy laden as those who have first caught its voice and obeyed its entreaty?

9. *To bind the Institutions of the Gospel with the Perpetuity of an inevitable human Condition.*

"The poor ye have always with you." We hold it a visionary hope that they can ever cease. Times of refreshing shall come over our world. The people shall be all righteous. All shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. But will not society then subsist? Must not the land be tilled? The manufacture plied? The ocean navigated? Labour cannot stop. Capital cannot be equalised. There cannot be a uniformity of station or of influence. Cheerfully we let go the thought of pauperism as incapable of a struggle against the beneficence of Christianity. Cheerfully we displace from our anticipations many of the present hardships of the most decent poverty. But still we foresee the necessary continuance of that comparative state. Now the poor have the gospel preached to them. That gospel must then be coeval with poverty. "How shall they hear without a preacher?" That ordinance then, with all others connected with it, is to be administered to the end of the world. There shall be the churches of the saints. There shall be pastors and teachers. There shall be the preaching of the everlasting gospel. "And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity, and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a

corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers." Jesus thus pledges the duration of his gospel not on some shifting change of the social fabric; but He who said in the moment of his ascension, "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world,"—takes the peculiarity of his religion and identifies it with the social fabric in its most certain elements and most invariable forms. This does not shut the gates of the future upon many high improvements of man. In this very matter we are taught to expect great adjustments and alleviations. Unhoarded wealth will be far more widely diffused, and its comforts far more generally shared. "And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing."

III. The demonstration of the truth of Christianity, arising out of this fact, remains to be established.

Our Lord appeals for the truth of his mission and message to this fact: He winds up a series of the most decisive and glorious miracles, by this fact which is not miraculous but which he regards as paramount and climacteric to all. This appeal is more convincing than any which can bring miracles before us. The ground of it is more wonderful than all the miracles which have been performed since the foundation of the world. Our interest in it now is only as a matter of evidence. How does it establish the truth of the gospel?

1. *It was the Accomplishment of Prophecy.*

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because the Lord hath appointed me to preach good tidings to the meek." Thus foreshowed Isaiah: this is the narrative of Luke: "As his custom was he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day and stood up for to read. And there was delivered to him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place

where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor." The original Hebrew word,* rendered meek,—but by the Septuagint translators, rendered poor, and so interpreted by our Lord,—intends as its principal idea, *the afflicted,* just as the Greek correlate† does, the *trembling,*—but poverty and affliction are frequently associated in Scripture, and the one is put for the other. So meekness may express the state of poverty because it is so generally uncomplaining. This idea of poverty is not only literally just, but is in other instances connected with the predicted advent of the Messiah. "He shall judge the poor of the people, he shall save the children of the needy." "He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy." "With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth." "In that day . . . the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord, and the poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

The argument requires one concession which none can refuse: that these were prophecies, or in other words, that they possessed a long anterior existence.

The purpose of these early predictions was two-fold,—to maintain the belief that the Christ should come, and to provide rules for the proper examination of the claims which might be advanced by any to be that Christ. And this particular prophecy, that He should preach the gospel to the poor, supplies very singular proof that the Nazarene did not challenge for himself an undeserved claim. There is a *circumstantial distinctness* in it. It is not broad and general outline to which almost any character or conduct might answer. It defines a specific undertaking. It allots a given work. It is, therefore, contrasted with the Pagan oracles. These were intentionally ambiguous. Their construction was artful,

* עניים. † πτωχος.

intricate, vague; like ænigmas, they rested on an accent or point. The mutterings of the Delphic steep, the incoherent verses of the Latin crone, directed to any thing or nothing. They admitted of the most diverse glosses. But scripture prophecy demands the strictest canons of criticism to be applied to it, the literal and the exegetical wherever it may be obtained, the rule of scope and analogy when the private interpretation cannot be understood; and it commonly inserts among necessary mystery some clause of plain reading and practical application like this, placing the power in every hand to set aside the whole unless this *specially* be fulfilled. It thunders its loudest curse against all who handle the word of God deceitfully: against all who add to, and all who take away from, the words of its awful integrity.

Moreover, this kind of prophecy not only puts itself to the proof by its insertion of such a plain and practical clause, but that clause confirms the divinity of its inspiration. For it could not have originated in the presentiments of the people among whom these hallowed scrolls were extant. That people expected and sought a dispensation of external grandeur and pomp. Every simplicity of the gospel offended them. This statement of its purpose, and the consistency of its conduct with it, towards the poor, provoked the darkest enmity of its foes. Who was the impostor that would, in such a spirit of the age, in such a temper of the nation, commit himself to this wild doctrine and generous adventure? None other than the very obstacle to their belief, and the actual gravamen of their accusation against it? From the oaks of Dodona the response might breathe which should be true,—from the shades of philosophy Plato might discourse conjectures and apostrophes which should be realised,—from their hoar rocks Taliessin and his bards might harp a note which should be echoed from remote events. But these

were anticipations founded upon certain commencements and auguries, the issue of which no fervid fancy was needed to foretell. Besides, they flattered the pride of patriotism, and always struck in with current opinions and associations. But this Prophecy,—that the gospel should be preached to the poor,—opposed universal hope, and angered none more than the poor themselves.

Nor is another difference between such predictions, and the heathen soothsayings, less striking than the preceding: they could not, like the others, fulfil themselves. If it had been declared that the warrior should win the victory, that one state should seize the government of another, that the youth should rise to general fame, here were incentives for heroic action and the pledges of glorious success. The die was cast, but it was a loaded cube. Such prophecies would never stand in want of competitors in fulfilling them. There was every lure and every motive. Now this is a very different announcement. To preach the gospel to the poor! Was this the beckoning of ambition? Must it not carry him who pretended to be the object of the prophecy through every scene of mortification? The deceiver can only be swayed by wicked aims. What was his inducement? What was his reward? Such self-fulfilling prediction might have been left unsought and unmatched for ever!

Behold, then, the Son of Mary! He sets himself forth as the Aspirant to certain descriptions which professed to be foreshadowings of a certain prophetic personage. He alleges and appropriates those prophecies only which are so *particular*, that imposture could not escape from their most literal test,—so *undesired*, that imposture could use them to no popular or fashionable end,—so *unsecular*, that imposture could find no motive to draw them upon itself. But there He stands! He knows the responsibility of what he does! He shall be despised and rejected of men! He shall be crucified! He still persists! He

points to himself whatsoever the prophets have foretold. He is the Centre in which all ancient witness determines. He is the Figure on which the beams of universal vision fall. "Truly this was the son of God!"

2. *It distinguished it from all other Systems of Philosophy and Religion.*

Take your stand in the world of men before Christianity appeared in it. Selfishness was its predominant passion, and the many were the objects of contempt. Every epithet was heaped upon them which a cruel levity could devise. The "vulgar" were "infidel," "malignant," "phrenzied," "ignoble," "profane." Nothing was taught, nothing was attempted, of general use and adaptation. Philosophy partitioned itself in sects: religion hid itself in mysteries. Only the privileged members of society could obtain enrolment in the one or initiation into the other. They spurned the crowd. Slavery was not some distant state of things: it was the common institution. The number of its victims often quintupled those who held them in oppression. And even if education had been open to the multitude, what would it have availed? Search the ancient schools, and was there a doctrine for the poor? Some of the speculations were beautiful, partaking of the lovely and the fair, on which their authors loved to dwell. Ingenious theories of virtue were proposed, wrapping themselves in some of the light and truth of that immortal essence. But what restraint did they impose on the headlong course of passion? How were the barbarous,—who scarcely knew to rear the hut, to chase the prey, to urge the skiff,—to appreciate refinements which required the whole mind of the best taught, the whole life of the most aged, to understand? Man in general could not take any interest in them as opinions or as motives. If the judgment had been capable of dealing with these distinctions, what power could they exert over the affections? What consolation poured they into the

aching and lacerated heart? Did they bring pardon to those who felt the arrows of guilt? To the conflict of inward depravity did they ensure a victory? To wretchedness, to sinking grief, to wasting dejection, did they offer cordial or balm? To the longings of the human breast did they unfold the assurance of an immortality? It was unsatisfactory, unbinding, inefficient, hopeless, all. This is Gentile scorn. Turn now to Judaism itself. The real system, which this name too frequently concealed, spoke of every man as a "brother." It looked beyond itself. "Love ye therefore the stranger." Neither the Edomite nor the Egyptian did it suffer to be abhorred. But even this religion, with its law of tenure, its division of property, its sacredness of family, was very soon abused. Divine denunciation again and again was hurled against those who continued to invade these vested rights of the poor. At last this disregard of the multitude broke out into the most blasphemous insolence. "Are ye," cried the angry Pharisees to the officers who had not laid hands on Jesus, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him? But *this people who knoweth not the law are cursed.*" Yet were they "confident that they were the guides of the blind! the lights of them which were in darkness! instructors of the foolish! teachers of babes!" And it must be remembered that unperverted Judaism was the religion of a particular people. It was their custody of the way of salvation until it should be made known to the world. It was held in by many restrictions. What was necessary to defend was compelled to circumscribe.—And we have heard of other systems. Their vaunting has been,—the brotherhood of mankind, the citizenship of the world! All men were to be equal! They taught their lessons strangely. They denied the great First Cause, the Fatherhood of a Deity. They blotted out the day of rest. They gloried that there was no life to come. And thus they truly linked the

species in its fortuitous rise or in its endless succession ; thus, huddling generation after generation into the grave of death and the abyss of annihilation, they effectually proved their favourite principle, the equality of all. They spoke no comfort to the poor. They jeered what they called their superstitions, mocked their weaknesses, extinguished their hopes. How different is the gospel of Jesus Christ ! What tenderness pervades its every expression ! The bruised reed it does not break and the smoking flax it will not quench. It asks each mourner, Why weepest thou ? each suppliant, What wouldest thou that I should do unto thee ? each sufferer, Wilt thou be made whole ? The children of the poor and needy look up as they see the countenance which now hangs over them, and hear the voice which now speaks to them. They thought not until now that aught cared for them. Their eye was unused to the sign of pity, their ear strange to the accent of friendly interest and concern. The haggard feature unbends. The cold distrust softens. The shrunken heart dilates. And while of human religions it may be universally denounced, " Ye have despised the poor,"—Christianity is seen the staff of their rights and the sanctuary of their sorrows.

And surely this is no unworthy voucher of the truth of the gospel ! The conception not only transcends the noblest, most philosophic, most statesmanly, thought of man,—but all his moral sympathies. Yet did this Claimant, ostensibly a mean and uneducated Hebrew, seize the idea, sublimely original and perilously experimental, and carry it out in a scheme of instructions and commiserations which he pledged should only be consummated by the catastrophe of the universe.

3. *It took a survey of Human Nature profound as it was new.*

It is recorded of Jesus Christ, with an emphasis worthy of Him who searcheth the heart, that " he knew what was

in man." This piercing insight was evident in all he said and did. The most refined benevolence of the politician and the sage never rose above the *national* man. It taught contempt and hatred of all beside. Whom did the Greek account barbarian? All who were not of his narrow shores. How did the Roman regard all the species beyond his haughty name? To spare the submitting, but to beat down and to destroy all those who withstood its unjust aggressions.* The gospel goes forth to the deliverance of *man.* He is the only object in its grasp of mercy. Its apostles declared that God commanded all men every where to repent. Its founder had commanded them to preach it to every creature. It bore an impress of universality, such as might be expected from Him "who hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth." Let him be the man of the city or the man of the forest or the man of the wild, and it gave him all its consideration. That he was man was all it asked. No matter what his nation, dialect, abode,—whether scorching on the Line or shivering at the Poles, the same was he to it, the same was it to him. The utmost that the kindness of the ancient science of human nature suggested, never rose beyond the *graduated* man. Him it flattered and extolled. It crouched at the feet of power and of wealth. It engaged itself to them to bind down the throng. It joined them in reviling it. The gospel here displays its disinterestedness. Rejecting none, it has, so to speak, the keenest eye, the quickest ear, for the notices of privation and distress. It contemplates these as its special calls and primary labours. Its discovery is, "God so loved the world,"—and it is too full of this greatness to speak of man in any other aspects than those in which God thus loved him. If Christianity be but an earthly system, how did it come to pass that it suddenly saw into the nature of man as it

* "Parcere subjectis et debellare superbos."—*Æneid,* B. vi.

never before was understood, that it acted towards it with an impartiality such as never before was exercised, that it invested it with a majesty such as never before was allowed? Is not this an analogy with that first grant of Divinity which gave the earth to the children of men? is it not like Him who hath made great lights for it? who hath stretched out the sky for its curtain? whose care tends, and whose bounty nourishes, all?

4. *It reflects most amiably on the Character of the Christian Founder.*

This conclusion already casually intimated, requires in this department of evidence a more searching estimate. There was demanded of Him who should make this philanthropic purpose his own, who should rest his all upon it, that he be most humble, most upright, most compassionate. Motives are generally assumed when their acts, or when acts of which they are capable, are exhibited. Why should we not then infer his aims from his proceedings? He preached the Gospel to the poor. Should it be thought that the desire of power might look to the multitude for the sake of their brute force and their easy impression, we have only to refer to his strong condemnation of all violence, and his fixed distance from all ambition. They would have made him a king, and would have taken him by force; but that "force" showed his perfect alienation from the design of them who would have attempted it, and at the same time that amazing influence which he refused to wield. Such a multitude, and such a direction of their passions, would have proved no small means of worldly aggrandisement.—His uprightness no less establishes itself. Here is none of the sycophancy which bows to courts, none of the policy which meddles with intrigues, none of the unworthy pliancy which takes the shape of outward associations and events. To preach the gospel to the poor was not the path which an obsequious self-interest loves to tread.—What, then, is

the compassion indicated by this course? He would devote himself to them who "could not repay" him. He fed the multitude, to teach and convince them. He lived among them, to share their wants. He sounded all the depths of their misery. For them He had no words of sharp rebuke. His invective was reserved for those who had taken from the poor the key of knowledge. "He delivered the poor from him that was too strong for him, yea the poor and the needy from him that spoiled him." He came with glad tidings of special interest and aptitude for the victims of supercilious scorn and hard neglect. He preached the gospel to them.—A character is thus made known to us the most perfectly generous and noble, a glory full of grace and truth. Is not this character in strictest harmony with this religion, and is not the harmony between them a resistless proof of the reality of the one and the truth of the other? Could such a character be pourtrayed by a false religion? Could such a religion be associated with a fictitious character?

5. *Its Divine Efficiency is proved to be complete.*

That which deals in bold and boastful pretensions, if unfounded, will soon be disproved. But the gospel proposed no common task. It was that of meliorating the soul, while it neglected not the outward condition, of the poor. It is in this condition of social life that we must expect to find the grossest errors of ignorance and the most frequent excesses of crime. Number will not wholly account for this: it is the effect of a constant pressure of need, a constant fretting of privation. To them does not extend the conventional morality of other classes. It cannot astonish us that there are found among them the outlaw, the desperate, the reckless. To speak of their vices, considering their general quietude and resignation, their industry and forbearance, may seem invidious. To proclaim their vices, considering the heartless wantonings and infidel darings of the rich and great, must seem

unjust. But truth ought not to be disguised. What has checked those vices, so natural to their state, so common to their circumstances? What has planted among them the virtues which command the admiration of all who read their short and simple annals? virtues which surprise us like choice and gentle flowers in the fissure of a rock? We know that the Gospel has done it. The poor have been transformed by it. They have chosen it as their heritage. They have taken it up as their cause. Their sorrows as well as temptations have yielded to its power. Their mourning has been turned into joy. It has lifted the latch of the cabin, and brought withit such a train of blessings, that though famine sat there leaning over the wasted offal of its store and the dying ember of its hearth, it has turned it into a house of rejoicing and into the gate of heaven. Here is a record of moral triumph of which Christianity may fitly boast. It is the power of God unto salvation in an experiment the most complete, upon a scale the most ample!

6. *The Truth of Christianity borrows new Evidence from its Operation on the Poor, when we remember the Nature of the Principles which it has inculcated.*

Had it exaggerated the claims of this class, had it urged those who belonged to it to protest and arm against all others, had it spoken of their condition as in itself more meritorious than that of wealth, had it taught moderation and contentment by arguing that poverty was an atonement for sin, had it for a moment given countenance to the error most current among our needy brethren that present suffering claims and deserves a reward and compensation in an after life,—then its course would indeed have proved easy and its success secure. But such comments were most foreign to its spirit. It did not directly touch the civil state of the poor. Its appeal was greater. It taught them to respect themselves as immortal. It assured them of the doctrines and the

facts of pardon, of acceptance, of regeneration. It made no allowance for their sin. It intimated no alleviation of their retribution. All its power over evil, all its relief of sorrow, was strictly spiritual. Not a worldly motive or inducement ever was adduced. Yet in Christian principles was there that strength and weight which could bend the most stubborn forms of habit, and tame the most terrible forces of feeling. It rectified those convulsive movements which society so commonly dreads. It ventilated the earthquake and saved its shock. It subdued the volcano and prevented its eruption. It stilled the tumult of the people. And this it effected by no superstitious spell, by no interdict on popular thought and enquiry, by no degradation of the industrious orders, but by enlightened views and holy perceptions which raised man not less as man, than they were adapted to raise man into Christian!

7. *In this Progress of the Gospel we must seek an adequate Cause.*

We speak not now of the persecutions which Christianity was early called to endure. It found a foe in every man, a warfare in every nation, a tyrant on every throne. The fact is too notable to require proof. It is as notable that Christianity successfully withstood, and gloriously survived, it. Its triumphs are monumental. By what armies were they won? What engines of power were set in motion for its help? What schools of philosophy lent it experience and fame? "To the poor was the gospel preached." First proclaimed to shepherds, and then declared by fishermen, it run an unstayed career. It leaned on no human resource nor aid. But there must have been a higher power in concurrence with it. This was the hand of the Lord! He gave testimony! He worked with it! And this is demonstration. A religion so opposed, so victorious,—with nothing in its nature to gratify the ambition, the sensuality, the indolence, of our

nature,—with nothing in its circumstances to favour, to facilitate, to defend, its own power in the world,—cannot be the counsel or work of man. Its success finds but one cause to explain it: It was of God! And that it was preached to the poor, seals the divinity of this attestation.

And now, in conclusion,—while we congratulate the poor,—it is almost impossible to exclude from our bosoms a deep pity for those with whom it is rarely associated and by whom its overture would be disdainfully repelled. Upon affluence itself the Scripture pours no contempt. "Every man to whom God hath given riches and wealth, and hath given him power to eat thereof, and to take his portion, and to rejoice in his labour; this is the gift of God." Yet is there humiliation even in these splendid donatives. We cannot but speak, too often, of the miserable great. They seem to be decked out for the sacrifice. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance with increase." "In all points as he came, so shall he go." "His glory shall not descend after him." Yet their salvation is *possible*. Let them make friends of the mammon of unrighteousness. Let them lay up a good foundation for the time to come. Let them come as the naked sinner to the Saviour. Let them seek the fruit of the Spirit, love, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. Be ye clothed with humility. And your riches shall be the tests of your conversion, and the means of your usefulness, and the precursors of your reward!

Behold, ye poor, one simple reason of that social distribution of which haply you have complained. You have but gathered the scattered fruits which fall from the plentiful horn of the possessors of the earth. You seem created to serve them. Here is mystery. It may be that here is wrong. "Behold we count them happy that endure." You are placed aright for one great facility! For you is secured one surpassing provision! He that

mocketh you reproacheth his Maker! That Maker has lavished upon you an inheritance the value of which mines of gold and rocks of diamond cannot express! With a propriety, to others far more contingent and remote, you may boast that the gospel is yours. Prove it well in all its hope, its peace, its consolation. And these things shall He say, who is the First and the Last, even to the poorest of his disciples, "I know thy tribulation and poverty, *but thou art rich!*"

SERMON V.

THE MYSTERY OF THE INCARNATE GOD.

1 Tim. iii. 15, 16.

—The Pillar and Ground of the Truth. And without Controversy great is the Mystery of Godliness.

—And in reciting this sublime paragraph we perhaps rehearse the very clauses of the earliest Christian Creed, simple but full in its avowals, sententiously brief and exquisitely compact, a good confession of evangelic history and truth maintained amidst persecution and apostacy, a form of sound words which infants were taught to lisp, the bold protestation of martyrs from the cross and stake. Or, remembering the parallelisms and measured periods of its construction, it may have been an early Christian Hymn, one of those which the first believers were wont to raise to Christ as God; a canticle which gladdened their hearts, soothed their troubles, and raised their hopes; a strain which they sung in their prisons and celebrated on their scaffolds, when they would not accept deliverance by the denial of their Lord. It is still as fitted to be our Testimony, being a summary and epitome of "the faith which has been given in entireness to the saints." It shall still be our song,—in this house of our pilgrimage,—our song in this night of faith and patience, —a new song,—we will sing it with joyful lips, we will sing it aloud upon our dying beds,—Let all things that have breath thus praise the Lord!

And if the criticism which we now propose be just, how strongly does inspiration attest the transcendant importance of these facts. We believe that the words,—"the pillar and ground of the truth,"—refer, not to the "church of the living God," but to "the great mystery of godliness." Did these expressions belong to the former sentence, they would weaken and depress the image. The "church" has already been denominated "the house of God:" the addition of these metaphors, the column and the foundation, is tardy, if they be not presupposed by the stateliness of the habitation, and injurious, if still they should be needed by it. Such noble supports cannot be wanting to this august fabric.—The conjunction, "*And* without controversy," is copulative and not illative. As it stands in the present collocation, it ill agrees with that abruptness which is required for the verse if quite independent, and for the sentiments if utterly unforewarned. Where is the connection which this part of speech always intends? But coupling the two portions, it retains its proper use. For this will be the reading: "The pillar and ground of the truth, and beyond contradiction great, is the mystery of godliness."—But the literary argument is not more complete than the theological. In what just or substantive sense is the church the pillar and ground of the truth? This gloss has been the root of all ecclesiastical error. It has fostered each rapine upon the rights of enquiry and the prerogatives of conscience. It has converted the school into the tribunal, the footstool into the throne. What substratum is left the church when it is made to upbear the truth? Should not these change places? "The proud helpers" would speedily "stoop under" the burden. It is for us to receive the strength and purity of these holy verities: they ask us not to become their props. Even Chysostom says: "The church is not the pillar and ground of the truth, but the truth is the pillar and ground of the church." And the inaptitude of the church for such an office is the more apparent,

when we inform ourselves touching the nature and condition of the particular church in question. It was that in Ephesus. The charge is from Paul to Timothy that he "might know how to behave himself" in it, and that he might "abide" in it. What imparted to it a renown, what has preserved of it a chronicle, which would warrant this exalted praise? Where is it now? Has it not "fallen?" Is not its "candlestick" displaced? Or, should it be contended that the church is here put for that which is universal, we are prepared to deny that it ever possesses that meaning through the whole compass of Scripture. There is the universal church of heaven and of earth, but there is no such phrase employed of the people of God in their present state. If we employ it not of the church of both worlds, there is no alternative but to speak of distinct churches. A general, an œcumenic, church,—a capitular, corporate, church,—parental, docent, decretive,—is an empty dream. Nothing between these uses can we find. Where should we seek for this pillar and ground of the truth, its living oracles and its infallible dictates? Exegesis, the analogy of faith, syntax, and no little authority, determine us, then, in this change of punctuation and of consequent version. And magnificent is the figure, and the thought, and the composition, in this altered form!

There is, however, another question which pertains to a more recondite province of criticism. We would not attempt to enter it, did not a flippant and sciolist infidelity broach its commonplaces of objection with so much confidence and reiteration. Certain copies contain not the word, God: but the relative pronouns, some the masculine and some the neuter. We should therefore be bound, were these copies of the greatest value and number, to read, Who or Which was manifest in the flesh.* We

* ὃς. ὃ. Being in uncials, the O C (C being the form of the ancient Sigma) stands thus to the eye in the MSS. Over them some-

must, then, enquire for the antecedent. *Who* was manifest? And there is but one reply, there is no nearer person, "The Living God:" and in the sentiment would be nothing violent, for this very church has been affirmed by the same writer to be "the church of God which he hath purchased with his own blood."* If we ask, *What?* The construction is, The Mystery. But this does not yield an intelligible idea. The entire predicate is of personal acts and qualities. What is now the force of external evidence? This only must decide. For the first, there are three high but not unequalled examples: for the second, there is only proof still greatly inferior: for the received text a hundred and seventy-one originals of all countries furnish their confirmation, all the ancient writers on theology in this language invariably follow it, and four of the most ancient and independent translations give it their support. Collation and rescension afford a most perfect defence in favour of the mystery of godliness, God was manifest in the flesh,—a fact in the absence of which the mystery altogether disappears.

It speaks every thing for the grave and explicit witness of these verses in favour of the true gospel, that they have been made the subject of this pertinacious cavil and unworthy suspicion. "Another gospel" cannot live a moment by their side. Their integrity is therefore to be assailed, however blindly and unreasoningly. It is a pillar to be prostrated, a foundation that must be destroyed. All feel that the passage is, if we read it right, perfectly decisive. Yet the utmost which the violation of every critical canon, which the licence of every conjectural emendation, has been able to accomplish, fixes a clear and irrefragable de-

times is drawn a horizontal stroke, as $\overline{\text{O C}}$. This is the mark for abbreviation. The English reader will see at once how near the Theta and the Omicron resemble each other, Θ. Ο: and how small a mark constitutes the difference between the lections, Θεος, contracted, ΘΣ and ΟΣ.

* Acts xx. 28.

monstration that Christ is God, and that his Divinity stamps its awful impress on all the stages of his mysterious Incarnation. This is the primordial and characteristic assumption of Christianity, its ruling thought, its plan, its soul. The doctrine is placed for ever beyond the reach of "controversy," though it may look down from its majesty upon the guile of artifices and the rudeness of attacks continually directed against it.

The Paragraph, of which the text is a part, declares to us the Strict Nature and Fundamental Purpose of the Christian System, and then, drawing it out into its respective components, illustrates it by the bearing and influence of all.

THE CHRISTIAN SYSTEM IS A GREAT AND HOLY MYSTERY, PRESENTING AN IMPORTANT FUNCTION FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF DIVINE TRUTH.

Mystery may only be a secret, and comprise nothing difficult in itself. When broken, the secret may be the plainest thing. The calling of the Gentiles was such a concealment. But there was a revelation of this mystery after it had been kept secret since the world began. When the nations were received to the faith and fellowship of the gospel, that which had been hidden "was now made manifest." Yet there might be still a perpetuated mystery: the meaning of the fact was simple when divulged, but the wisdom and the grace of the arrangement was inscrutably profound. For a mystery, though enunciated, may be left unexplained in its reasons and unshorn of its glories. In its dimensions and in its depths it may remain immeasurable. "I speak a great mystery." "I show you a mystery." These are not the less necessarily obscure because they are "spoken" and because they have been "shown." The indefinableness shrouds them. The mountain by its heaven-ward height is lost to our vision. The orb is darkened on our sense by its blaze. And in whatever involves the divine nature we must be

prepared for the infinite. "The mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ." Redemption displays all the same wondrous perfection. It is "the wisdom of God in a mystery." It is "the power of God." It was "hid in God." It was His conception. It was His will. It lay enshrined in his searchless bosom. It cannot be understood. "Great, and most confessedly, is the mystery of Godliness, God was manifest in the flesh."

But there are many who deride this view, who speak of mystery as incompatible with the purport of a Revelation. Now this objection surely goes too far and urges too much. For it would then be inconsistent for any religion to pretend a divine authority. Religion must, in addressing us, though its information be most scant, tell us of Deity, insisting on spiritual relations and eternal issues. The poorest pretext of any religion must be a theism. "Who can by searching find out God?" So vainly empty is the adage, Where mystery begins, religion ends! Nor less light is the remark, that ere a proposition be believed all its terms must be appreciated. There is something in every term of knowledge which defies this rigid perception. That which our senses can only recognise,—the substance which we call matter,—is but a hidden groundwork of certain manifestations, and these manifestations, and not itself, can merely be observed. Not only, were this statement just, would our circle of belief be most diminutive; the centre would be denied us from which to describe the most narrow segment. Self would be the ænigma of ænigmas in a universe of ænigmas. The earliest postulate of all discernment, of all reasoning, must sternly be refused. Others diversify the objection by taking for granted that Revelation can only be an appeal to our reason, and that it will therefore contain no mystery: nothing but what is intelligible to reason. We cheerfully subscribe that reason must judge its evidence, that reason must ascertain its scope. The mystery is no object

of our faith apart from the *testimony* which avouches it, and from the *fact* in which it consists. Concerning the mystery we may believe now, that it is certified, that it is most important and valuable, that it has a glorious signification, that it agrees with a boundless state of things. Surely it is a fitting exercise of reason, to presume that any portion of a revelation which is purposely veiled or hopelessly unintelligible, is nevertheless worthy of its author, and harmonised to its design; and that it partakes of these qualities only the more in that it is too stupendous for explanation.

The proper notion for us to form of a Revelation is, that its essentials shall entirely exceed our powers of *discovery*. Particular moral truths, when stated to us, though hitherto unperceived, may awaken an inward sense in their behalf. We can define, we must approve them. They did not necessarily lie beyond the field of our enquiry, nor do they surpass our capacity. But when God *reveals* any thing to us, in the rightful meaning of that phrase, he does not merely help us to learn that which now is: but he makes known to us that which was not before: his good pleasure, his purpose: that which has no existence but in his mind and will. Shall we not, then, be prepared to expect in such revelation things too high for us? That which is now not to be known, in our eternal instruction and advancement may not always be unknown. Other principles may be placed at an interminable distance because of their character. The deep things of God, the unsearchable riches of Christ, the sevenfold illuminations of the Spirit, are due to this word of grace. They give demonstration of it. It would want its highest proof, if it were not as much above our reason as our reason is below the Infinite Mind.

The light of reason has become so common a phrase, that it may seem hazardous to call its correctness in

question. But it is unmeaning. Reason can boast no light. It is only a capacity to judge upon any subject presented to it. It finds a general analogy of its function in the bodily eye. That does not impart the elemental light, but receives it, together with the impression of those images which it unveils. It is nothing more than an organ to be exercised upon things without. Reason is no more the source of knowledge than corporeal vision is that of day. A moral sun and a spiritual world are as much needed by the one as the physical sun and material world are for the other. Why should we then hold high and proud discourse concerning the discoveries of reason? None has it ever made. It has defined what was exhibited, it has learnt what was taught; but this was all. This is its province, and it cannot exceed it. It might be demanded of us, Has not reason discovered the secrets of the astronomic sky? It has traced out nothing but what existed, and has but spelt the refulgent syllables written there. It might be further urged, Has not reason discovered those great dynamics which the luxury of man calls to his aid? It has brought together, it has applied, powers which it discerned in their scattered or their slumbering state. Reason invents, originates, creates, nothing. And confessedly incompetent to discover any thing mechanical, shall it arrogate to itself a power to find out a religion? Should, therefore, a religion, adequately certified to have come from God be proposed to reason,—it could not act a part more worthy of its dignity, more faithful to its nature, more consonant with its design, than to acquiesce in it at once and close with all its informations.*

Nor can reason be shown to be more consistent in seeking out the lowest meaning which the language or the method of certain mysteries can bear. With grief we mark it,

* "Nescire velle, quæ Magister optimus
Docere non vult, erudita inscitia est."—*Scaliger.*

that a criticism called rationalistic is gaining fast in our schools and writings. It is seen in the avoidance of all that is great, transcendental, supernatural, infinite. It would reduce and naturalize all. Its consent to every truth is cold, narrow, and reluctant. Any solution, the most pitiful and the most earthly, it prefers to the generous and soaring faith which asks no more than whether it be revealed. It deals with the highest subjects of that revelation as calculations which should be the most cautiously revised. It would weigh the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance! Oh let it not be afraid of its own credulity! Let it not suspect its too staid soberness! It need not add rule to rule, and multiply caution upon caution, lest a too warm confidence carry it away! It wants no check! Its habit is sufficiently wary! Its danger is harmlessly remote! We avow another canon, another taste. We think that in every examination of Christianity the highest meaning is the most natural, the most divine method is the most reasonable, the most ultimate solution is the most probable. We do not revolt at that sentence which Augustine is reported to have uttered: "I believe it because it is impossible!"* There appears to us nothing so credible, nothing so likely to be true, in a revelation from God, as its exhibition of some fact which would be impossible to all save to Him with whom all things are possible!

We might not improperly call to the recollection of the adversaries of mystery, as a characteristic and presumption of revelation, that there is nothing un-

* I have searched for this saying, however, in vain, among the Father's heavy tomes. The following beautiful lines of a Pagan poet, Pindar, more happily convey the same idea :—

"Εμοι δε θαυμαζαι,
Θεῶν τελεζάνλων,
Ουδεν πολε φαινεθαι εμμεν ἄπιζον."

Pyth.: Ode 10.

reasonable in it, but much in its denial. It is not unreasonable to reconcile ourselves to a world full of physical intricacies and of moral problems: it would be absurd to contend against them. It is a mystery that there is a God: it is an absurdity that there is no God. It is a mystery that this creation had a beginning: it is an absurdity that it never did begin. It is a mystery that God was manifest in the flesh: it is an absurdity that the arrangements, the promises, the types, the predictions, the aspirations, of four thousand years terminated in the feeble consummation of a mere human child's birth and a mere mortal man's death!

The language is borrowed from a Pagan institution. In temples of the most solemn architecture, by perspectives of wondrous vista and quaint recess, by pageants of the most gorgeous machinery and the most dramatic illusion, the ancient mythology was taught to those who desired to be versed in its deeper lore. We debate not whether by these spectacles that idolatry was the more imposingly confirmed or the more readily detected. The effect may have depended upon the order of the mind addressed. The discipline was severe. The ordeal was terrific. Every hideous phantasma glared upon the votary. He was left alone amidst the deepest gloom. He then emerged into a light the most beautifully rich and softened, and amidst a harmony the most rapturously welcoming and triumphant. He entered a favoured class. He was numbered among the perfect. He received high and fervid congratulations. What he had been taught we cannot accurately determine. There was legend, incantation, and many a mystic rite. There was the representation of retributive punishment and of elysian bliss. There was the story of the gods, though it may have been variously told. There was the awful adjuration to secrecy. All seem to have left those precincts with the deep impression that the Rule of the Mysteries was

most important to the interests of government, to the refinements of religion, though mainly to the prejudices of the vulgar faith.

Christianity availed itself of this usage to select a term descriptive of its sublimity. It was calculated to arrest attention. It was a challenge, that in nothing which could dignify religion was it deficient. The Heathen world put forth its array of some veiled doctrine: it demanded for it a superstitious veneration: it surrounded it with a magic pomp: it adumbrated it by typic pageant: it urged monarch, statesman, philosopher, to seek admission to its shrine: it peremptorily insisted on this acquaintance with its meaning as the qualification for official rank and as the pledge of personal worth. We need not say how vain was the pretence. There is no injustice in charging upon it juggle and collusion. Its bondage made the earth to groan. It held back the natural progress of mankind. It preserved no precious remains of knowledge. It was the instrument of manifold tyranny. The lights of science and of truth it but served to quench. Still that name everywhere was known. It awakened emotions of suspense and dread. Another Mystery was therefore proclaimed. Having thus enounced itself, the Religion of Jesus instantly raised its contrasts to all that had passed under that deluding name.

1. The ancient mysteries were only affectations of the wonderfulness ascribed to them. They surrounded themselves with a purposed reserve. They included nothing which might not readily be apprehended. If there was difficulty, they contrived it. If the knot was inextricable, they had entangled it. If the course of revelation was slow, they made it slow. If the curtain was laboriously raised, they had hung it heavily that so it might be raised. All was intended to excite curiosity, to produce impression, to strike the aspirant with artistic effects. It was the scenery of a theatre. It was the sorcery of a cell. They

who presided over them loved darkness rather than light. There does not appear to have been any exposition of the laws of nature, any laying open of the foundations of morality, any disabusement of the errors of mythology. It was a "cunning craft and sleight" to deceive. It was ignoble trick and base imposture. It contained not, it familiarised not, the great in principle, or the great in fact. It was an inflated exaggeration. Unlike this wilful perplexity, this ample drapery to cover nothing, the Mystery of godliness was really transcendent. It muffled itself in no fold, it was abhorrent from all disguise. It spoke in no swelling words of vanity. It encircled itself with no seeming of doubt and amazement. The more it was investigated, the more tremendous the wonder proved. To all research of thought or of imagination it grew, it aggrandized, it fell back into its own greatness. The more simple it was presented, the more majestic swelled out all its proportions. It was not lifted, it was its own height,—it could not be extended, it was its own compass. The cloud which was upon it was of its own glory.

2. The effect which initiation in the ancient mysteries wrought upon the mind of the candidate was generally that of disappointment and aversion. The man of intelligence, though he came to them a believer, could not go forth from them with any assurance. It was, as far as he could understand it, a cheat: and as far as he could approve it, a blinding policy which the multitude required. All was unsettled to him: only of his prepossessions,—often soothing, always poetic,—was he undeceived. His poor satisfaction was that he was no more the dupe. He saw that long time he had worn chains which he had never felt as chains: but it was not liberty which he now enjoyed. Indignation at the banded impostors was his first feeling. Contempt of the mummeries, however splendid, practised upon him would quickly follow. By

a strange law of our fallen nature he might defend the wicked process to others: without shame, he might draw others into it. Yet he must have entertained an unmixed disgust. The exposure could not but have awakened it. Those whom he had formerly revered he must henceforth despise. They had spoken "lies in hypocrisy." Their "deceit was falsehood." If any particle of the truth was in their possession, they had "held it in unrighteousness." But they who have "knowledge in the mystery of Christ," rise in every sentiment of gratitude and satisfaction with every step of that knowledge. Nothing has failed of their expectation. Nothing has sunk in their esteem. All is unspeakably surpassed. Their highest confidence is justified, and they "know whom they have believed." Their fairest rectitude of motive is vindicated, and they "hold the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience." Their "faith groweth exceedingly." "Now they are full." Their meditation is sweet, and is as a ladder set up on the earth and the top of it reacheth to heaven. Their song has now begun, but it has a burden for eternity It is a mystery,—vast, ineffable, interminable, incomprehensible, deific. It is marvellous in our eyes! We cry it aloud, we publish it abroad,—and as the exclamation travels on, all worlds, all natures, reflect it, and Marvellous! becomes the labouring utterance of the universe. Only this is said. This only may be confessed. This only can be understood.

3. Much delay attended the probation of those who sought enrolment among the enlightened in the ancient mysteries. Their trials were protracted. Their claims were not infrequently disputed. Frivolous excuses were raised. Private jealousies were allowed. When even the course had began, it was not certain that it might not be suspended. Obstacles could still be thrown in the way. Before the profession was attained, there was every harassing and tedious ceremonial. Lustration followed

lustration, each power of endurance was tasked to the utmost, subterranean chambers reverberated to each other, there was a prison-house and escape from its horrors was not sure, panic congealed the stoutest frame, all extremes of sensation were combined, and the whole service was fenced round with every caution against eager impatience or inquisitive haste. But the Mystery of Godliness knows no such suspicious restrictions. "Learn of me," is the language of its Founder. A docile temper is the exclusive condition. We haste and delay not. All is revealed which it is good or practicable for us to learn. "Unto us it is given to know the mystery of the kingdom of God." "If our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost." Still, in order to understand this mystery, there is no requirement to forego our soundest, quickest judgment. "In understanding be men." But much of anterior notion and opinion must be renounced. These are "the thoughts" which "the Lord knoweth to be vain." All preconception should be confined to this, to expect something as much higher than all we could propound, as heaven is higher than earth and as God is greater than man. All else that we have anticipated is to be disowned. If we would be wise, we must become as the fool that we may be wise. The Spirit of Christ is covenanted to teach us these things. If they be hidden from us, it is because of our pride and self-sufficiency. "The natural man receiveth them not." "If any man be ignorant, let him be ignorant." The initiate is not withheld for a moment from those who properly seek it. "Why tarriest thou?" "If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest."

4. The most awful vows of secrecy were exacted of those who received the supposed purgation of these mysteries. A universal execration fell on the betrayer. None would have consorted with him, venturing in the same house or ship. The most private haunts were not

safe for the whispered disclosure, or the bantering mimicry. The eye of the hierophant was every where. His arm was sufficiently strong and far-reaching to crush every foe. Infamy and death forged the chain of silence. In opposition to this injunction, the Mystery of godliness asks the widest and most unrestrained publication. Its first disciples felt an irresistible impulse, received a direct commission, to declare it throughout the world. Their language explains the strength of the principle within them. "We cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." "We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak." "To make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery." They "used great plainness of speech." Their commission was the most undisguised. "What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye on the house-tops." Thus they acted. "Thanks be to God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place." Christianity can know nothing of a slow and reluctant development. It tolerates no reserve in its manner of teaching. Its first expounders disclaimed all artifices in stating it. They designedly opposed themselves to the officers of the mysteries: "We have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth, commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."

5. The whole arrangement of this singular discipline was invidious. It looked unfavourably on the great mass of our race. Selfish in its aims, destitute of any noble philanthropy, it intended the perpetual thraldom of the multitude in ignorance and degradation. It was the most cruel and potent auxiliary of priestly device and political despotism. It favoured and flattered the wealthy, the

powerful, the learned: to them it freely opened its doors. It had "their persons in admiration because of advantage." The poor, the unlettered, the many, the common people, it disdainfully repelled. Whatever light was emitted, it flickered merely on a few pinnacles of society: none was poured into its interior, none searched its foundation. An idea of profanity was systematically associated with the crowd. In contradistinction to this haughty insolence, this vile contempt, with which the Mystagogues spurned and branded the species, Christianity surveys our nature in its broadest features, its truest intimacies, its grandest generalities. If it *be* marked by a partiality, it is toward the poor. It says: "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" It says: "Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted!" Among its brightest evidences, crowning all its miracles, is this attestation: "To the poor is the gospel preached." Its mercies are unto all. As no rank of life is disputed, so no national distinction is recognised. The portals of this Temple stand wide dispread: it invites all, yet most importunately the despised and heavy-laden, to enter in: and there they shall be taught "the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord."

We may suppose that the inspired writer of the text, in styling the Mystery of God indubitably GREAT, bore in mind the common separation of the less and the greater ceremonies through which the respective postulants were called to pass. These were deemed alone worthy of the epithet, and alone capable of justifying it. The distinction of the Heathen idolatries into a higher and a lower degree was annihilated by the pitiful meanness of both. If that distinction could be taken, the greater would only be the more elaborate falsehood. But here *was* greatness, perfect, unparalleled, divine. It was great enough to glorify Deity, the source and centre of all glory,—great enough to

vindicate the solemn pauses and anxious intervals and rising wonders of earth's natal week,—great enough to emblazon all divine government and to explain all divine providence,—so great, that time might have seen none other event and history have recorded none other tale,—great, as if thought could have fixed none other attention, and sensibility have vibrated to none other chord. The heart of this mystery, its perfect esoteric, is theme for eternal study and celebration.

Now the Greater Mysteries of the Pagan world pretended to solve *religious difficulty*. They premised that a great portion of the popular credulity might be simplified. They construed facts into allegories. They stripped the fable of its accessories, and exposed the moral which was couched in it. They reduced generally received notions into the fewest elements, and yet they made nothing explicit, and left nothing sure. They shipwrecked hope, and abandoned it to toss on a sea of troubles. But the Mystery of godliness was a grand interpretation. It was a key to cyphers. It was the substance of shadows. It was the fulfilment of visions. It gave light and meaning to "the dark sayings of old." All by it was made intelligible of promise, type, prophecy, enactment, ritual, dispensation. "The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

Those Greater Mysteries boasted of a *predominant doctrine*. We do not with certainty know what that was. Whether the unity of the Divine Nature, or the immortality of the soul, has been questioned. We think that we may conclude, with perfect confidence, that it was neither the one nor the other. Atheism and Materiality were far more probably their lessons. "The stock was a doctrine of vanities." Now the Mystery of godliness has its cardinal truth. It is the Incarnate Word. All connected with this manifestation is like itself. It is sin-offering and propitiatory sacrifice. We receive the atone-

ment. A form of doctrine is declared to us. It is the glorious gospel of Christ. With these first principles of the doctrine of Christ all that was hitherto revealed is connected; we are built on the foundation of the *apostles* and *prophets;* Jesus Christ himself being the chief *corner-stone.*

Those Greater Mysteries commanded a *powerful influence.* The chambers of imagery would not be soon forgotten, even if its import was explained. Terror sometimes prevailed, or it yielded to joy and repose. Some felt an immitigable dread, others a calm relief. They who were undeceived the most, carried with them an unfading impression of their emancipation. Others, whose fancy oppressed their judgment, felt convinced of an impulse higher than their nature,—they were filled with the inspirations of the temple,—they were possessed of the god.—The Mystery of godliness is power. Christ dwells in the heart by faith. All the springs of our being are moved. His love constraineth us. It is as though the work of redemption rose into a hallowed structure of magnificent proportions, and we were left in it to gaze, to measure, to adore; our inward spirit catching its illapse, and dilating to its grandeur. "That ye may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."

Those Greater Mysteries claimed to impart an *inward life.* The spirit was supposed to emerge from a mystic death, to acquire new powers, and to occupy new relations. The *regimen* of its *noviciate* was called its birth. The man who had passed through these exercises was publicly hailed as endued with an existence higher than intellectual. He was of a privileged class. He might blend with the highest natures of the universe. And thus the Mystery of godliness is the exponent and means

of a true and everlasting life. Christ liveth in us. He is our life. This new birth is to holiness. It is regeneration, a making of us again: it is renewing, a making of us afresh. The old model is not only consulted, but features, unknown before, are superadded. "If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature."

With a marked description is this Mystery announced: it is the Mystery of GODLINESS. The word is not very aptly translated. Piety or religion would better render it. It may sometimes be put for Christianity. This is not improbably its present scope: The mystery of the Gospel, the primary, the distinctive, mystery of the Gospel! Christianity deserves the title. It is holiness, it is devotion. Such abstracts fitly describe it. Or it may denote this quality as produced by Christianity. This Mystery is characterised by its attributes of purity and pious excellence. They belong to it. It has a tendency to inspire them. They are its ever-present glories and its invariable emanations.

But here rebuke is dealt. Those arcana to which the Mystery of holiness is opposed, were the scandal of the ages through which they survived. They were "works of darkness." Their establishments consisted of shows and impersonations, and required a throng of attendants to act them. The minds of these persons must have been corrupted by the occupation. The revelations made were of the grossest kind. The seats of the principal rites might, from inducements of policy, be preserved from the more unblushing profligacy; their lessons did not restrain it. In their more distant dependencies, it knew no bounds. They were the nurseries of "vile affections" and "abominable idolatries." "It is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."

The Mysteries were necessarily ungodly. The Pantheon they disclosed was real or fallacious. If these deities existed and governed the world, they were the prototypes

and panders of all its crimes. If they were no more than ideas, those ideas, the most revolting, were approved and consecrated. The worshippers could but be transformed into their resemblance. The "*mind* and the *conscience*" of all associated with them must be "defiled." At this distance their history suggests all defilement, and "we will not take up their names into our lips." But ours is the Mystery of godliness. God is manifest in the flesh. We in Him see the Father also. It is the beauty of holiness in its subsistence and its action. Christ is in us. What contrition is awakened in us, what humility, what gratitude! What purity should we emulate, walking in the light, that we may have fellowship with him! What devotion should we pay! What service should we render! "We behold his glory." "We see Jesus." We "consider Christ Jesus." "What manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness!"

The Religion of the gospel being thus defined to us, we learn moreover that its GREATNESS is UNQUESTIONABLE. Controversy it has always excited: what has provoked disputes so fierce and numerous? But it is incontrovertible. Still the sentiment is as we have proposed it: it concerns the quality of its greatness. We must not soften the fact. We must not endeavour to bring it into the plane of our analogies. We cannot conceive it in our hearts. It is altogether above our reason and independent of it. No exercise of intellect could have brought us nearer to it. Its infinite superiority to the highest effort of our mind, to an endless stretch of our thought, we do not for an instant controvert. It is its glory. It is its efficiency. Thankfully we allow it. Exultingly we proclaim it. "Publish ye, praise ye."

Nor do we admit that our boast in the greatness of this Mystery is unintelligent. We have no excuse to offer as though any slight of our understanding had been proposed by this revelation. Our understanding is most fully ex-

ercised. Its appropriate capacity is honoured. Its true province is prescribed. Is it not bound to respect the Divine authority asking its attention, the Divine wisdom urging its assent, the Divine faithfulness requiring its confidence, the Divine interposition deserving its love? It is no prostration of the human mind, but its native tendency, its true office, its flight God-ward!

And thus are we prepared, by inspired language, for every suggestion and sneer. Questions may be mooted, difficulties may be raised, How can these things be? The Mystery may be called inconceivable, its *greatness* being set against its *truth*. What is every objection to it, come from whom it may, but a repetition of the unmeaning charge, that it is so great? We have no reply. We seek no rejoinder. We admit it. We boast it. The case supposes it. The fact involves it. "*Without contradiction it is great!*"

But the Proposition of the Text is not exhausted. It asserts a particular USE WHICH THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS SUBSERVES IN RELATION TO THE TRUTH.

The Truth, the definite article making it specific, is Christianity: but as it may be convertible with Godliness as to the system which it designates, so it represents a peculiar view of it: the first speaks of its holiness,—this of its certainty, veracity, and force.

The reference is to the buildings in which the mysteries were unfolded. In fanes of commanding eminence, on some precipitous pass,—of purest marble,—over the sea-washed promontory,—standing against the deep azure of the sky,—girded by colonnade,—threaded by corridor,—swept by terrace,—filled with apparatus to impress the mind,—diversified with proscenium for the dramatic illustration of mystic record,—with massive foundations sustaining all,—the Heathen Mysteries were rehearsed. This seems to have occurred to the mind of the inspired writer: the Mystery of Godliness is the pillar and ground of the

Truth. A noble temple impresses itself upon him, and there is proportionateness and strength. They were illusion, this is real: they were fiction, this is truth.

The Pillar of an edifice is its most prominent object, and first catches the eye. It is most beautiful, and adorns the pile into which it is built. It is the image of stability. It is the test of symmetry. It binds together base and dome. And it is the Mystery of godliness which gives to Christianity its perfection of beauty, its principle of durableness, its character of harmony, and its range of combination.

The Ground is the foundation, that on which the building rests. Its utility is unseen, but is every moment proved. Embellishment and grace are as nothing without it. The pillar which supports so much, needs it as greatly as the highest ornament and owes all its solidity to its hidden strength. And it is the Mystery of Godliness which bears up the superstructure of Christianity: it is the impregnable support on which all its compactness, bearing, and weight depend. "Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

This must be further explained. The Religion of Messiah professes to be The Truth. "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should witness unto the truth." The gospel is, therefore, "the truth as it is in Jesus." His promise to his disciples was: "When He, the Spirit of truth shall come, he will guide you into all the truth."* This is "the truth which is in us, and shall abide in us for ever."

Why is Christianity so entitled? Because it is strictest conformity to the Divine will and purpose. Because it is an announcement of so many facts. Because it is an appeal to an absolute state of things. Because it bears with it all the validity of authority, and all the demonstration of proof. Because it gives to the mind of its

* John xvi. 13; "εις πᾶσαν την αληθειαν."

believer an assurance which nothing can shake. Can more belong to Truth?

How is the Mystery of the Incarnation the pillar and ground of the Gospel? Its importance to the whole scheme of redeeming mercy is thus declared, and that importance is easily vindicated. So clearly was it perceived by the apostles, that this is their fixed rule of decision: "Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God." What other hold have the doctrines of salvation? There is no atonement, no acceptance for the guilty, no regeneration for the depraved, if this shall be denied. Christian morality hangs upon it too. Therefore is this "the doctrine which is according to godliness," that which is presumed by it, intermixed with it, indispensable to it. You make "another gospel which is not another," when this vital doctrine is compromised or expunged. "It is the pillar and ground of the truth." Bow it, and the building rends: prostrate it, and the building falls. "Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not *obey the truth*, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you!"

And thus we "speak the mystery of the gospel." We may have "knowledge in the mystery of Christ." New revelations may be made to us hereafter, new capacities may be imparted, and much, that is now beyond our understanding, eternity may unfold. We feel no impatience that we are now in the shadow of a mystery, which may turn to us, at however distant a period, a more illuminated side. Be this as it may, we as "the stewards of the mysteries of God," now preach them to cheer, to humble, to save. Let their testimony be believed. And when they most confound and overmatch our minds, let us rejoice in the cause of this amazement. They are depths of riches. They are truths which stand related to

modes of the Divine existence with which our being is henceforth involved. They are past finding out. We delight to know that Redemption is so costly, so transcendent, so unfathomable, that it must be a Mystery for ever!

Behold the majestic Pillar which supports the Temple of Christian Truth. It will stand when the pillars of the firmament shall have long since tottered to their fall. The tide of times has beat at its base, the rage of nations has foamed high around its elevation: here artifice has attempted to undermine, and there violence has sought to shatter, it: but it still swells upward, unmarred, unshaken, covered with trophies of victory and shields of triumph, —an architecture unhewn by art or man's device, its capital high as heaven, and its plinth durable as eternity.

Behold, likewise, the Ground of this Temple of Christian Truth, deep laid, equal to the dimension and pressure of the building. Cities shall sink in their ruins, the everlasting mountains shall be scattered, the foundations of the world shall rend, but this, as an imperishable adamant, shall sustain every proportion and every bearing of the Pillar which has its seat in it, every prop and bulwark on which the entire Temple rests. "The foundation of God standeth sure."

Behold, then, this Temple of Christian Truth itself, as well as its towering column and its firm foundation. So far we have only gone round about it. Let us now enter it. It opens into many chambers, it is adorned with many scenes. These, one after another, will be disclosed. They will rise upon us, pass before us, in their own succession and series. Thus shall we learn of what our religion consists, and upon what our faith is established. The rain may descend, and the floods may come, and the winds may blow,—the Temple beneath which we seek initiation into this greatest Mystery is founded on a rock.

SERMON VI.

THE INCARNATE GOD VINDICATED.

1 Tim. iii. 16.

God was manifest in the Flesh, justified in the Spirit.

"I wish," observes one of the profoundest philosophers that this country has produced,* "I could say that there were no mysteries in Scripture. I acknowledge there are to me, and I fear always will be. But when I want the evidence of things, there is yet ground enough for me to believe, because God has said it." In this statement there is much to condemn as well as to admire. Why should man wish that there were no mysteries in religion? Could there be a religion without the premises of a necessary self-existent and eternal Cause? Could there be a redemption of our wicked race without the motive of an inconceivable pity? When such mysteries are revealed, they are revealed as mysteries, intended to be so regarded and allowed. It is not an obscurity which they assume, a concealment which they desire to promote: it is an excess of light, it is an unsusceptibility of solution. To the Infinite Intelligence, and within the Divine Consciousness, mystery is unknown: and therefore those perfect ideas must, to our minds, be overpowering. What God sees clearly, we must see confusedly.—But in the language of the philosopher there is much to applaud. He has defined the exact warrant of faith. Could Christi-

* Locke.

anity find analogy, it would not be that analogy,—could it be shown probable, it would not be that probability,—could it be proved reasonable, it would not be that reasonableness,—on account of which it ought to be believed. Belief of this kind would render no respect to the "faithful Creator." It would be independent of his character. His testimony, otherwise than it was proved by indifferent witnesses, would pass for nothing. We should believe Him no more readily than we must the unworthiest of his creatures. *Whom* do we *not credit* when his allegations are sufficiently attested? The ground of belief in God is his simple saying as the God of truth. If a religion came from Him which was obvious and palpable at once, faith would have little scope, and yield him little glory. It would make it appear that He was like ourselves. The condition of assent would be that every part could be immediately and perfectly understood. But this is to forget the highest evidence of a Revelation, its sublime originality, its disclosure of what could never otherwise be known! We look for the awful marks of the Understanding which is infinite.

We are not then surprised or revolted by the earliest notice which Christianity affords us of its profound mysteries. We have but to think of the necessary conditions of a Divine revelation to creatures such as we are, to perceive that the absence of mysteries would be to stamp an unreasonableness upon it. It must resemble its Author. It must involve the relations of man to his Creator. Its worth must be measured by its communication of absolutely new ideas and facts. Christianity, therefore, avouches itself to be the Great Mystery of Godliness.

We need not to urge any further the figure which is employed. It has been amply explained. The Christian System is likened to a Temple, beautiful and massive.

It has pillar and foundation. Whatever a pillar is to an edifice, whatever a foundation is to a pillar, such is the Mystery of Godliness to the Dispensation of evangelic truth and grace.

This Temple invites us in. It is a holy place. It strikes with awe. August and ineffable are its wonders. We may behold what we cannot explore. The profoundest of all is proclaimed the first. The spectacle of a descending Deity rises upon us. We follow him through the scene of his incarnation. The mystery continues insuperable, but all inconsistency imputed to it, all prejudgment cherished against it, is triumphantly refuted and disproved.

I. THE FACT OF A DIVINE INCARNATION IN THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST.

The proposition is complex, and we will, in the first instance, reduce it to its parts.

1. *The Manhood of Messiah.*

This is not often placed in modern controversy. But it is a most important article of the testimony given for our faith. Deity is uncreate and unchangeable: this is an effect of formation, having a beginning, and that which is supposed at a given time to be assumed. We mark a distinct act of Divine power in its production. "He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death." "That holy thing" "was conceived of the Holy Ghost." This is the fact which is naturally the most interesting and significant: it is becoming, as thus strangely new and transforming, that it should be made most prominent: it is more imperative in this stage of the announcement to aver that the God became man, than that the man was also God. The Jews, therefore, first stumbled at His humanity. "Whom makest thou thyself?" "For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God." They looked for another manifestation than

of God in the flesh. They asked a dreader sign. True. He did the works of his Father, the demonstrative tokens of equality. But they would have seen Israel's Holy One in his ancient manner of descent, when there was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of sapphires, and as it were the body of heaven in its splendour. They would that the trumpet might sound long and loud, that from some hoary summit there might be promulgated a fiery law, that the voice of words, the thunder-accents heard of old, might be renewed. They would that the Lord of hosts should have taken possession of the Holiest place in a cloud of glory, enthroning himself between the mysterious cherubim, and speaking from off the mercy-seat. These were the symbols by which He erst was known. But had they not deprecated them? Had they not "entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more," when accompanied with those portents? And this "manifestation in the flesh" was an answer to their prayer. Mild and gentle was the form. Meek and lowly was the vehicle. Yet, be it remembered, the challenge of Divinity was not suspended, and in the very terms of this consecrated yore. For the first revelation to Moses, which he was to report to the people, was: "I AM hath sent me unto you." When Jesus was asked of his enemies, "Who art thou?" he answered: "Even that I said unto you from the beginning." That "beginning" was to the shepherd-prophet beneath the precipices of Horeb. From a glory enveloping the bush the voice resounded. It was the angel of the Lord who spoke. It was still the Lord. It was God. It was, then, a messenger; but of co-ordinate majesty. Who was He? Jesus claims to be that appearance, that authority, that Lord and God. He repeats, in immediate connection with such claim, the awful appropriation of this Style. And inasmuch as the I AM had combined with himself another representation, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of

Isaac, and the God of Jacob,—He who came in the flesh thus stretches back his being: "Before Abraham was I AM."*

The earliest Antichrist directed its assault against this fact. It "denied that Christ was come in the flesh." Phantasma was supposed to have covered and beguiled all his acts and sufferings. The higher nature was allowed. But it was held incredible that his blood was really shed, and that he really died. Certain impressions, utterly fallacious, it was contended, were made upon the senses of beholders: He, it was argued, only seemed to be crucified. A power preserved him from the agony and strife and shame which had outward semblance: and his actual form was unsubstantial as his deeds and woes. The incarnation was considered as a cloud upon which appearances were reflected and images were drawn, which had all the effect of exciting attention, but which commanded no influence of living and personal events.

The argument, since this doctrine of the Shadow is not now seriously asserted, has fallen into disuse. None deny, so far as we have heard, that it was "His own body on the tree." We have principally to differ with the Psilanthropist who maintains that Christ was no more than man. Yet, in this matter, *we* may not be quite free from the ancient error. Are we satisfied with every statement of our Lord's humanity? Do we glory in its plain and frequent avowal? Do we embrace the avowal

* No idiom will account for the frequent recurrence of this avowal, always without the pronoun, though our translators have generally added it. There is no necessity for one to be understood. In the quoted passage, they did not attempt it. It ought not to be supplied when He thrice proclaims himself in Gethsemane with such terrific effect. It is further vindicated. "I am the first and the last." "The Living being." The periphrasis of "ὁ ων και ὁ ην και ὁ ερχομενος" is the perfect Greek translation for the Jehovah, יהוה. The ερχομενος exceeds the simple idea of *being*. It seems to imply the infinite activity of the Divine Nature. It may answer to מוצאתיו.—Micah v. 2.

without regret, without limitation, without exception? Do we as greatly value the proofs that "He grew in wisdom," that he "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," that he "marvelled," that he "begun to be amazed," as the glimpses of a higher being? Do we receive with perfect conviction, and share with perfect gratulation, passages which speak of Jesus "a man approved of God," which declare that the judgment is committed to "that man whom He has ordained," which nakedly set forth that the one Mediator between God and man is "the man Christ Jesus?" We have marked a disposition to slur over these texts: a state of mind that evidently wished to extenuate them, and that would not have mourned their suppression. And the same error is repeated whenever our impressions of the Saviour's sufferings are attempered by the recollections of an impassive nature. We are bound to conceive of them in their utmost severity, without abatement and relief. They were all that ordinary humanity can undergo. Every peculiarity of His human condition was but an increase and excitement of his griefs and pains. If, therefore, we are tempted to wish an abridgment of the testimonies to His manhood in its most certain truth, and in its most perfect comprehension of all that manhood, *as we know it*, involves, because we fear its incompatibleness with something which we otherwise maintain,—if we more lightly survey His privations, his conflicts, his tortures, his regard to life and his aversion to death, because of any relative considerations,—we need to be schooled again in this first principle of the doctrine of Christ, that he is properly, strictly, absolutely, man, in whatever is peculiar and essental to man.

For here lies all the change. Even at this supposition of the case. If He be a Divine Person, he is incapable, in that person, of any change. But he may enter a new relationship. He may impose on himself a singular re-

sponsibility. He became the Son of man. That was a fact of a certain date and arrangement. It had to be originated. Then in this,—is the peculiarity of Christianity. Here commences the mystery of the gospel. It is no new thing, no marvellous thing, that the higher nature exists: but this is the tremendous property of our faith, that the higher nature has bound itself, as no comparison can serve in any wise to illustrate, to that which is infinitely inferior, to that which, being a creature, must for ever continue finite. Christianity does not rest on the Divinity of its founder, but on his humanity as conjoined to Divinity.

The other part of the Proposition is, therefore, now to be affirmed:—

2. *That Messiah always possessed the Divine Nature while he has assumed our own.*

Though there may be none who argue from his Godhead against the reality of his manhood, however it is to be feared that too many extenuate it, it is most common to argue from his manhood against his Godhead. That He is Divine we are not now formally called to prove. You can bear witness that in this pulpit it has been no neglected theme, nor reluctant topic. It may be safely committed to scriptural teaching. It is demonstrated as far as plain avowal can go, or as necessary deduction can carry it, or as general implication can express it.—Is not avowal plain? "He was God," He is "the mighty God," He is "the great God," He is "God over all," He is "the true God." He is Lord God Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts, the Lord of glory, the Lord God of Israel. Is not deduction resistless? He is the Almighty. He searcheth the reins and hearts. He is the everlasting Father, or Father of the everlasting age, that is, in the import of the idiom, the Eternal. He is the Fellow, or Compeer, of the Avenger, whose sword awakes against him as the shepherd and the man. He is the thrice Holy. He filleth all in all.

He is the First and the Last. He spake by the prophets. —Is not implication inevitable? Not in the language of the prophets does he speak, "Thus saith the Lord," but in his own announcement of rightful majesty, "Verily I say unto you." There is the awful reference of the Deity when speaking of himself as of another: The Son of man is come. The Son of man goeth. That ye may know that the Son of man hath power to forgive sins,—having suspended the power to do so on the bodily cure,—I say unto thee, Arise. "The gospel," certifies Paul, "is not after *man:* for I neither received it of *man*, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ." "For who hath known the mind of the *Lord*, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of *Christ.*" "Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? For ye are bought with a price: *therefore* glorify *God* in your body, and in your spirit, which are *God's.*"

This two-fold distinction and conjunction are to be kept in view by us if we would "learn Christ:" and if we are asked for the simple idea which should be embraced, while every other, forsooth, must be made the subject of derision, —we ask in turn, What is that unity which these objectors boast? Where is that singleness of conception for which they plead? Is it not the law of the human mind, and the necessity of its present state, that our ideas should be crowded and intermixed, that they should exist and operate in concrete? And does it follow that there is mental infirmity in these compounded ideas? Are they not in this quality the same with the things which they reflect? Is not the universe full of combinations? Is not the generalising power of the understanding its sublimest exercise? Is Deity to be known by us save in this cumulative way? How unworthy and cold is the abstracting and analytic process! How energetic and glowing is the associating and comprehensive! Nor can it be denied that it is, at least, as easy to disentangle the

complex ideas of two natures, as to detach from each other the ideas of qualities inhering in one.

But there are not wanting those who condemn this as a hypothesis put together in order to meet certain difficulties. They describe it as a key which was invented to give them a plausible interpretation. Now were this a well-grounded charge, we do not see how we should incur any blameworthiness. Here is truth which we are required to find. There are confessed difficulties in every conclusion. Are we to overlook these difficulties, and to compromise them? We want the reconciling principle. What does a sound philosophy urge? To take the largest view, a view which may reconcile difficulties without evading them, a view so full and systematic that they may disappear before its consistency. It is the inductive reasoning on which we thus proceed. Apparent contrarities exist in the material world. We allow both classes of phænomena, and then address ourselves to their harmony. In this awful question, we rest upon the facts of a divine and of a human nature predicated concerning Jesus Christ. We discover that the characteristics of each are ascribed to him. We must believe that as there is "one Lord Jesus Christ," these respective characteristics, while they cannot be confounded, do unite in him. We attempt no theory: we yield to the simple exigence of the case. If two things can be equally proved, it should be no ground of temptation to dispute either, because we cannot amalgamate both.

In this manner we conduct the study of other supposed contradictions in Scripture. There are prophecies of a suffering and of a conquering Messiah: he is to be slain and to be crowned, to be rejected and to be acclaimed. There are different aspects presented of Justification: it is asserted to be without works: it is as strongly asserted to be by them. The determinate counsel and fore-knowledge of God find their fulfilment by events in which man

takes a part of the freest agency. We may, or we may not, seize the connecting link of representations like these: in neither instance are they made the more or the less true, however pleasant in itself would be that illustrating judgment.

No antecedent disproof can be raised against this union of natures in the person of Christ. Is it impossible? There are things impossible. There are arithmetical, geometric, impossibilities. It is impossible to recall time and to undo fact. But you are taken by the present enquiry out of the regions of necessary truths. It is a supposition of divine will and creative power. Nothing, *save our experience*, is contravened. You might say, arguing upon what you have known or might have anticipated, that it was impossible that "the Eternal, the Immortal, the Invisible," should ever have spoken, ever have appeared, to man,—should have selected temporary vehicles for these purposes, "walking in a tent," "dwelling in a cloud." He has clothed himself with ensigns of power and majesty. This Incarnation is without parallel, beyond expectation; it is "in the end of the world;" it is "once;" its glory requires, and consists in, its uniqueness; incontrovertibly its mysteriousness is great. May there not be a moral fitness in the act? Is it not a medium of the most benevolent expression and interposition? If intended to open a communication and access between God and man, can any be so intimate and approximating? It is a Divine Condescension beyond mortal thought: the more probably true that our imagination could not have visioned it!

But it is the inspired word which alone must decide it. We have found all the perfections of Deity ascribed to Jesus Christ: we have found all the finiteness of the creature, and that creature man, borne by him. Such statements corroborate the different parts of the Complex Proposition, "God was manifest in the flesh." We do

not repeat them. We are now in search of statements which will support the Proposition as a whole.

"The Word was God: the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." "Of the fathers concerning the flesh, Christ came, who is God blessed for ever." "Who, being in the form of God, thought it no robbery to be equal with God, but was made in the likeness of man." "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporeally." The humanity is in all these passages treated as unnecessary to Him who assumes it, not belonging to His nature; while our amazement is summoned that he should be seen in so unlikely a form, and in so humiliated a condition.

But this conjunction being revealed, we might reasonably expect a uniform tenour of language: now, according to occasion, dwelling upon the original dignity: then, as suggestion may arise, bringing forth more fully the subordinate rank: but always consistent in applying them to one Person, the only Mediator. This must now be tried.

1. *Titles of Divinity and Manhood are given to Him.*

He is the Son of God, and the Son of man. The Virgin hath conceived: her child is Immanuel, God with us.—"He was in the bosom of the Father:" the Magi "saw the young child with Mary his mother."—He is David's Root and Offspring, he is David's Son and Lord.—"Say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God:" "Then said Pilate unto them, Behold the man."—He is the God of Abraham: he is Abraham's seed.—"God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh."—"God sent forth His Son, made of a woman."—"When he cometh into the world, he saith, a body hast thou prepared me."—He "liveth and was dead:" he is "the Almighty."—He is "the man Christ Jesus:" he is "God our Saviour."—Great stress is laid upon this humanity as opposed to some other law or principle. "According to the flesh." "Who in the days of his flesh." "Forasmuch as the

children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same."

2. *Attributes of Infinity and Limitation are ascribed to Him.*

"No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." "He went in and out among us."—He is "a Man of sorrows:" he is "Jehovah of hosts." He is "acquainted with grief:" he is "God over all blessed for ever."—He is Advocate: he is Judge.—"Of that day and of that hour knoweth not the Son:" "Now are we sure that Thou knowest all things."—"Of my ownself I can do nothing:" "My Father worketh hitherto and I work."—"My doctrine is not mine:" "I am the way, the truth, and the life."—"The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven."

3. *Representations of Self-sufficience and Dependence are assigned to Him.*

"Whose goings forth were of old, from everlasting:" "Unto you is born this day a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord."—"I have power to lay down my life, and I have power to take it again:" "The Father hath given the Son to have life in himself."—"Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up:" "He is by the right hand of God exalted."—"I and my father are one:" "My Father is greater than I,"—"I sanctify myself:" "Him hath God the Father sealed."—"I am the good Shepherd:" "Why callest thou me good?"—"Without Him was not any thing made that was made:" He worships! "By Him all things consist:" He depends! "All judgment is committed to Him:" He obeys! He feeds thousands by self-willing power: He hungers! His is "Divine Power:" He yields! His is "Majesty:" He intercedes! He rescues from the grave: He weeps! He pardons sin: He supplicates! He receives homage: He gives thanks! "He quickeneth whom He will:" He bows the head and dies!

Yet is there always Self-vindication in his humblest acts. Does He as in very limitation ask, "How many loaves have ye?" He by infinite power multiplies them. Does he ask, "Who touched me?" He by a word heals the wound. Does he ask "Where have ye laid him?" He by simple fiat raises the dead. We never lose sight of Right and Power amidst the most abject restrictions: they are near, they are at hand, they are ready,—though in their quiescence and rest.

This great mystery of godliness, God the Son taking our nature, is entitled a MANIFESTATION. We are not unaccustomed to regard the Incarnate State of the Son as a mere condescension,—a hiding of his power, a shrouding of his glory. But though it is all this, it was his chosen method of revealing Deity. He was the Brightness of the Father's glory: its essential emanation. He was also, mediatorially the image of the invisible God. He declared Him, and was substituted for Him. He "spake that which He had seen with his Father." He identifies himself with his Father in co-ordinate rank and nature: "If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him." "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Christ, then, is embodied Divinity. We must conceive of It from Him. He becomes its type and index. The truth, the purity, the benevolence, of that infinite essence he exactly represents. It were foolish as profane to seek, to attempt, higher demonstrations. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is in the face of Jesus Christ. To know the only true God is to know Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent. As we cannot understand God who is a Spirit, God is manifest in the flesh. It is the sensible copy, the transparent mirror, by which He will be known. We need not ascend into heaven. We need not delude ourselves as if we could define primordial and abstract truths. We need not let our imaginations essay to soar to more in-

tense and ultimate perfections. The God with whom we have to do,—Creator, Redeemer, Judge,—is to fill that space in our judgments, and to command that share of our feelings, which the character of our Lord Jesus Christ so justly claims. We have no right to think of divine holiness, equity, goodness, as of any other kind than as they are made known to us by "the mind which was in Christ Jesus."

A manifestation* is a making clear of that which is difficult and obscure. It is of frequent occurrence when the later Scriptures speak of Christ. "The Life was manifested, and we have seen it: and show unto you that eternal Life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us." Now there were works which He was to do, as well as revelations to unfold. "The body of his flesh" was furnished for great peculiar ends. In this He was manifested, made palpable to us: and by its doings and sufferings all those ends were made palpable. He was "verily foreordained a lamb without blemish and without spot, before the foundation of the world." But for moral effect, as well as for those ends, He must be known. Therefore "He was manifest in these last times for us." "Ye know that He was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." This was the principal design. Every other is comprehended in it. "For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil."

Nor let us suppose that this Manifestation was always unperceived and unappreciated. He was actually recognised. "In the beginning of miracles He manifested forth his glory: and his disciples believed on him." How often did His awe fall upon them! How often did rays of divinity burn around Him! "We," they report, "beheld His glory, the glory as of the only-begotten of the

* Μανος φαω.

Father." It was beneath this dread impression that Peter exclaimed, beholding his power and command, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Late in his avowal, Thomas invoked Him, "My Lord and my God." Demons confessed Him and fled. Amidst the miracles of His crucifixion, hardihood repented and sought an entrance into His kingdom; and stern violence, which had done death on Him, yielded to his claims. Whatever may have been the doubt and the vacillation of His followers, they had concluded, in spite of all their prejudices and their fears: "We believe, and are sure that Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." One signal manifestation was there even of a sensible kind. Upon a high mountain, in the presence of celestial delegates and earthly witnesses, His essential glory so streamed forth that he stood environed in sun-like splendour, traces of which lingered upon him after the vision had past, and he had returned to the plain: for "straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed, and, running to him, saluted him."*

Such, then, is this mystery! Human nature,—not the nature of angels,—is taken by Him, as the nature of those whom he came to save, as that which had become a dying nature and in which he would uncompulsorily die, as that nature the sensibilities of which he would henceforth adopt as his own. It is the organ of a glorious discovery, and the instrument of an infinite expiation. "Both He that sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren." Surely shame like this no mere man could know in so accounting his fellows: it is significant indeed, when we recall the Messiah's divine disparity, his voluntary abasement, and how he associated himself with them who were infinitely inferior, by the adoption of their nature, and the undertaking of their cause. It need not

* Mark ix. 15.

to be proclaimed as extraordinary, that creature deigns to fraternise with creature: it is worthy of all astonishment and gratitude that God should be manifest in the flesh, in order that he may call us brethren. Well might He, in his original independence, have been ashamed of the relationship: but he is man for the very purpose that he may so consider man.

But the agency of our Lord in his incarnate mission often confounds us. That Deity should, by some inscrutable process, attach itself to human personality,—that it should create that being with the immediate design of taking it into eternal union,—that Jehovah should resolve to express his character, and exercise his government, and declare his will, through such a medium,—is a supposition which could not have occurred to man. It must have been doubted, had it most incidently risen in conjecture, had its probability grown out of any calculation, had it, as the last suggestion, presented itself to our despair. It would have been too bold to be contemplated, too dread to be desired, too remote from the field of all our imaginations and comparisons to be conceived. Whatever may be the design of this now REVEALED FACT, it is plain that it is an ultimate resource. No measure can be higher, greater, more glorious, than this. Until it was determined, nothing of Divine skill, and power, and love, had reached its uttermost. They were not tried. You could not have called the works of God, though all were made in wisdom, and all were wrought by power,—the firmament with its worlds, the universe with its firmaments,—the wisdom of God, and the power of God. He fainted not, neither was weary, though he acted still. His treasures of knowledge shone in all their store, through he dispensed them still. His love kept full its fountain, notwithstanding its countless streams. He still reserved infinity, eternity, absoluteness, all his perfections, to himself. He did not lavish them. With him all doing,

however wonderful,—all donative, however munificent,—was of facility and fulness and redundance. But the Incarnation! The uttermost was reached. No fact could follow in any competition with it. There could be no costlier gift, no grander display, no vaster effort. It was the concentration. "Having yet One Son, his well-beloved," He sent him, gave him! "It pleased the Lord to bruise him!"

Now not only is this contrary to the prepossessions of men, but being informed of it they do not reconcile themselves to its manner any more than to its truth. They ask, Where is the God? Blinding themselves to occasional sun-bursts of his majesty, they dwell upon his common appearance of humiliation and grief. How seldom do they hear the Voice of God, but accents of distress, fainting, and despair! How seldom do they behold the Eye of God, but lids closed in slumber and wet with tears! How seldom do they recognise the Arm of God, but hands bound with cords and nailed to the cross! Shall the Incarnate be scourged, derided, smitten,—a robber preferred to him,—sinking beneath the engine of his death,—crucified between malefactors,—spurned of earth,—forsaken of heaven? Where is the Port and Bearing of the Lord Most High?

An exculpatory process is supposed by the Text. "He was justified in the Spirit."

II. THIS FACT OF A DIVINE INCARNATION IN THE PERSON OF CHRIST IS THE SUBJECT OF A SOLEMN VINDICATION.

Flesh and Spirit are opposed to each other as terms. The Spirit is not made to stand for the human soul, for that is included in the word flesh; signifying all the constituents of humanity. Nor does the Spirit intend the Third Person of the Trinity, for there is antithesis, and the contrast must be found in the same person respecting whom it is affirmed. God was manifest in the flesh, in *his* flesh: was justified in the Spirit, in *his*

Spirit. The prepositions are the same, and the sentences are in parallelism.

We think that "the Spirit" must, therefore, be what "the Flesh" is not. The Flesh denotes the whole manhood of Christ: the Spirit can, then, only express what is not his manhood, that is, His Divinity. Both are descriptive of His one person, related but unmixed.

Other passages of inspiration support this view. "Concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to *the flesh;* and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to *the Spirit of holiness,* by the resurrection from the dead."* Is it not an explicit setting of things most extreme against each other? What representation of his Divinity can there be so just as holiness,—and especially when we remember how the seraphim raised to him the acclaim of Holy, holy, holy? "How much more shall the *blood* of Christ, who through the *Eternal Spirit* offered himself without spot to God....?"† Is not this the designed opposition of these mighty differences? The rightful power of his sacrifice and the cause of all its dignity and efficacy? What more appropriate description can there be of His divinity than by its eternity? Does it not mark its necessary independence? "Christ hath once suffered for sins, being put to death *in the flesh,* but quickened by the *Spirit:* by which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient."‡ This seems decisive. He revived and rose from the death of his humanity by the energy of the Divine nature: that nature which had always existed, which had warned and punished the antediluvian generation, the spirits of which generation, for the rejection of His preaching, were shut up in the prison of an endless retribution. How, then, we proceed to enquire, is the Assurance of our Lord's Divinity, its perfect evidence, the justification of all his

* Rom. i. 3, 4. † Heb. ix. 14. ‡ 1 Pet. iii. 18—20.

acts and undertakings during his manifestation in flesh among us?

1. *A Manner of very original Dignity and pre-eminent Authority was assumed by Jesus Christ.*

Prophets of the highest order had preceded and foretold him. A messenger had gone before His face, than whom among them that are born of women there had not risen a greater. They were carried away in the spirit: the word of the Lord came unto them. Their cry was: Hear ye the word of the Lord. But this Teacher spake in a tone altogether new. "The people were astonished at His doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority." "But I say unto you." "It is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me." "As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world." "Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am." "He that receiveth whomsoever I send, receiveth me." "Heaven and earth shall pass away; but my words shall not pass away."—Those ancient seers directed men, penitent and seeking, not to themselves but to God. This Prophet calls them to himself for comfort and relief. "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." "Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."—They disclaimed all personal homage. He enforces the exercises of mind which are most religiously sacred. "Believe also in me." "If a man love me, my Father will love him, and we will come unto him and make our abode with him." "If any man will serve me, let him follow me." "That all men should honour the Son even as they honour the Father."—They turned away attention from themselves. He riveted it upon his person. "Whom do men say that I am?" "Dost thou believe on the Son of God?" "What think

ye of Christ?" "What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where he was before?"—They postpone their own glory. He is intent upon his. "Father glorify thy Son." "Father I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory."—They speak of themselves with every disparagement. His appeals are most lofty. "The Son of man is Lord of the sabbath." "One standeth here who is greater than the temple." "I am the resurrection and the life."—They aspire to nothing but simple human acts, nor exceed their burden and vision. He can say, "Thy sins are forgiven thee." "To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise."—They prophesied of him. To him gave all the prophets witness. The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy. But it was "the Spirit of Christ which was in them, testifying beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow."—All this is inexplicable if he be one of the prophets, if he even be only their chief. Does a vein of assertions like these comport with him who is meek and lowly in mind, who did not strive nor cause his voice to be heard in the street, who would not bear witness of himself, were he only man? On such a supposition, Is his language cautiously weighed? Is his conduct unequivocal? Must no false impression be transferred to auditor and reader?—But how is He "justified in the Spirit!" By the demonstration of his Deity! How lucid becomes the dark saying! How valid the dubious pretension! How reasonable the startling claim! Our wonder henceforth is, that His bearing could be so gentle and mild, that his glory could be so restrained and softened, that so little claim should have been advanced, that so little deference should have been challenged! So, on the other hand, we shudder at innumerable expressions and aspirations, on any hypothesis that they were those of the highest man or of the most exalted creature!

2. *Jesus Christ was punished with Death under the Accusation of Blasphemy.*

The law of Moses contained a precept which was doubtless in the minds of his accusers when they sought to slay him, but which could not bear any but a very forced construction if applied to him. "He that blasphemeth the name of the Lord, he shall surely be put to death." This was the actual statute which they most probably cited when they said: "We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God." They did not deny that there was a Son of God, —their own Scriptures prepared them to admit it,—but they would not believe that the present claimant was he. Now here was the legal issue. Was it proved, or could it be refuted? He had declared himself to his disciples, and to some of the subjects of his miraculous deliverance. He had not precipitated the announcement: indeed he had long forbade its report. It was sometimes wrung from forms of speech which, though they might bear, could not compel, such meaning. Did He call God his Father? "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he said that God was his Father, making himself equal with God." This was, however violent the interpetration, the arraignment from which he must defend himself, or which he must justify. Solemn is the Inquest, both National and Procuratorial, Ecclesiastical and Civil. The Oath is exacted of him by the high priest: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said." "Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed? And Jesus said, I am." Pilate, who had marvelled greatly at the mien and language of the prisoner, on hearing that he avowed himself the Son of God, "was the more afraid." He is doomed to crucifixion upon this charge. The infuriate rabble reviled Him in his agonies: "He trusted in God; let him deliver

him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God." The pretext of his death was this boasted coequality. He confessed it. It is reduced to this awful proof. The accompanying miracles of his death so impressed the Centurion that the Sufferer was that which he now died to prove himself to be, that he exclaimed, Truly this was the Son of God. His resurrection was his public inauguration: "God glorified his Son Jesus." A public assertion was made of his Sonship: "Thou art my Son: this day have I begotten thee," or avowed thy generation. "But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever." What but this essential Deity could bear out the assumption of his life and death? We see how he was understood in making that claim, how he sanctioned that understanding, how he persisted in it, how he avouched it amidst the grave and judicial forms which were to put all to the final proof. Had he,—hard as is the thought,—not been God, where, where, could be the vindication of even his integrity? Where would be the injustice of his fate?

3. *Imposture was laid to the Charge of Jesus Christ.*

The expectation of the Messiah was general. He was described in ancient prophecy. The time in which he should appear, the attributes by which he should be distinguished, the works in which he should be engaged, are all set forth. No common tributes are poured out at his feet. No scanty honours are wreathed around his head. Though He of Nazareth did not publish his appropriation of this office with needless notoriety, yet his claim to it was always unambiguous. "I that speak unto thee am he." He received approvingly this suffrage. Thus Nathaniel honours him: "Thou art the Son of God, thou art the King of Israel." Thus Peter declares him: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!" In the first instance it is accepted as an act of faith: "Believest thou?" In the second it is followed by more than com-

mendation: "Blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven!" "Devils came out from many, crying out and saying, Thou art Christ, the Son of God, for they knew that he was Christ." His entrance into Jerusalem with humble triumph, his good confession before the Governor, both by symbolic action and oral protest, bound him to the awful trust. And what was comprehended in Messiahship? Even his contemporaries, though their eyes were blinded and their ears were heavy, connected with it a mysterious origin: "When Christ cometh, we know not whence he is." They attributed to it a large revelation: "When Christ cometh he will teach us all things." Peruse the testimonies which were of old. He must be the Woman's seed. All type must converge in him. All prophecy must coincide with him. He must be Messiah the Prince. He must be Jehovah our righteousness. He must be Ruler in Israel. He must be the Desire of all nations. He must be the Lord who shall suddenly come to his temple. How could we clear the man of sacrilege who should arrogate such large pretensions, such glorious titles, such Divinity, to himself? Allow that Jesus was God, and his "right it is." He takes easy possession of all. There is no exaggeration. He is preferred before those whom in order he "comes after," because, in eternal existence, he was "before them." He was "justified in the Spirit."

4. *Jesus Christ undertook Mediatorial Suretyship and Representation.*

He was in this capacity a servant of the Father: he stood in the stead of sinners. Divine claim was actually infinite: human demerit was relatively so. He was held in the arrest of justice: he was obnoxious for sin. He undertook for us. He was to find the ransom. Now of Him we learn that he saw no corruption, that it was not possible that he should be holden of death. The efficacy

of his atonement ensures his vindication. "He was brought again from the dead *by the blood* of the everlasting covenant." "He was raised by the glory of the Father," that is, because of the honour redounding to the Father by the sacrifice of the cross. But how could this merit be in the creature, finite, dependent? Where in the creature are these astonishing powers? What could authorise or enable him to interpose? Could he remove one moral stain? But holding the Deity of the victim all is assured. How immaculate his obedience? How availing his sacrifice! What infinite considerations stamp the meritoriousness of both! "The church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood!" "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son, cleanseth us from all sin!" "He hath for ever perfected all them who obey him!" His Divinity absolves, and he is justified in it!

5. *Jesus Christ bore the Imputation, and was subjected to the Stigma, of Human Guilt.*

Though his Mission was to do his Father's will, though in its conduct the Father loved him because he laid down his life, yet was his apparent state, though really the most glorious, in the sight of all intelligent creatures the most dishonoured. He was made sin. He became a curse. The Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all. He was despised, and we esteemed him not. Hell raged against him. Deep groans of anguish proclaimed his mental conflict. In his death he cried with a loud voice, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" From what causes might such abasements be suspected to arise! Why this load of obloquy and storm of wrath? Were they personal liabilities and merited disgusts? But if all be substitutionary, could a creature have entered such a breach? Must he not be consumed at once? How could he be expurgated of such a vicarious account? Allow the Deity of Christ, and what shadow can rest upon him? Peremptory was his right so to act. Infallible was his pledge so

to succeed. Suspicions of him were not even momentary obscurations of the light in which there is no darkness at all! He was the Holy One and the Just. He was Christ Jesus the righteous. He has put away sin. He has brought in everlasting righteousness. Who but He could have taken such a part? But he is acquitted! He shall be for ever honoured! Worthy is the Lamb that was slain! He is justified, but only in the Spirit, his essential Deity!

6. *The Methods which the Saviour pursued for the Accomplishment of his Ends seemed unlikely and ineffective.*

Transcendent was the task confided to Him. It involved the support of the divine honour, the overthrow of evil, a consistent ground of mercy, a denouncement of sin to the pardoned sinner. It was to build up the waste places of the creation. It was to set God right with the universe. In the prosecution of this glorious design we observe no march of power, no sway of authority, no train of state. The manger and the cross are the extreme points of a series corresponding to them. His friends wondered, grieved, and fled. His enemies goaded him forward. Satan rejoiced. How offensively and foolishly imbecile seemed the means! But He made them avail! They were really wise, fitting, mighty, and He selected them and wielded them! How does Omnipotence vibrate through them all! He travels in the greatness of his strength along this mysterious path! He gathers victory of weakness, honour of reproach, glory of shame! The methods, which appear so strange, in His hands become great and suitable and triumphant. He is justified in their use through his Godhead. To the creature the means would be as unserviceable as the ends were insupposeable.

7. *Certain Promises were made by the Son of God to his People, which must always have tested his Power to fulfil them.*

There is a strain in them most bold. They grasp unknown interests, and ages, and worlds. They convey an impression of rights and properties the most extraordinary. They are rested upon his own execution of them. They breathe no air of earth: they speak no power of man. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." "Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." "I will come again unto you, and take you to myself." "I give unto my sheep eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." "Because I live, ye shall live also." "I will send the Holy Spirit unto you." "If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it." "I come quickly; and my reward is with me." How can such engagements consist with finite presence and mortal power? How vain must be these boasts if he be but man! Take the converse. "God was manifest in the flesh." What too large, too glorious, was there for him to promise? to perform? He is justified, however boundless the pledge, in the fact of his Deity.

8. *The Dispositions and Exercises of Mind which the Redeemer inculcated on his Disciples in respect of himself, may create a strange Suspense.*

They are religious affections, and the same as we owe to the Supreme. We must "come after him:" "confess him:" "leave all for him:" "lay down our life for his sake." We are required to trust in him, to learn of him, to love him, to serve him. When we read the language concerning him, we note its lofty fervour. "The love of Christ which passeth knowledge." "The unsearchable riches of Christ." "Grace be with all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema Maranatha." Are these the deserts of the creature? Are they not arrogant demands? They are justified by that in which

He only can be justified,—the essential Spirit of Godhead. "The Lord, he is the God! The Lord, he is the God!"

And thus, Dear Christians, we see that it is no light thing, no barren speculation, for which we contend. It is not even a doctrine invaluable in itself. Its relative importance to the Christian system is of the most serious kind. It is the life, the strength, the glory, of the whole. The credibility of the gospel is suspended upon it. Nothing is so naked, so unmeaning, as the Cross without the Divinity of Jesus,—nothing is so mighty in interest, so magnificent in glory, as the Cross with it.

But let us be satisfied with the Mystery of godliness. It is a mystery, ungratuitous, necessary, essential: it is only what it cannot but be. To the Deity is it known, but it is large as omniscience and omnipotence. It lies not in the circle of Infinite Thought and Will as a smaller thing; as that which is readily contained in it becomes immeasureably less,—it fills it! But there is an attempt among men to detect mystery where it does not exist, to make that mysterious which cannot be so transformed. Instead of allowing their minds to be engrossed with that beyond which angels do not suffer a thought to stray, they busy themselves with the recondite symbolism of edifices and the typic import of rites. They quarrel with the obvious and the direct: with statement and declaration. Their minds crave mystery! They demand scope for it! Their higher wanderings of sentiment must not be checked! It is for them to say whither they soar and what they discover. We might in charity rate their visions higher, did they not trammel themselves with trifles small and mean. But when we are informed that posture, garment, painting, are instruments of these rapt dreams—that there is a charm in a colour, that there is a religion in a certain style of architecture, that there is a sanctity in a particular quarter of the sky,—when such poor rhapsody as this is what they vaunt, we see at

once the distinction between mystery and mysticism, between what God discloses of simple grandeur and man affects of empty pomp. All this reserve, this device, this shadowing, this allegory, this ænigma, belongs to "the mystery of iniquity:" it is its appropriate apparatus, its characteristic medium, its darkness visible, its tyranny garbed. It is the excuse for the lack of thought; it is the soothing of mind into blind submission; it is the gilding of the chain whose iron eats into the soul. The Mystery of the gospel lifts up the mind to its fullest capacity: the mystery of darkness forbids all intellectual exercise, and puts a very merit into its suspension. At the proposition of the first, our understanding springs up and swells: at the show of the second, it sinks into impotence and drivelling. The one is associated with a sound mind: the other with an imbecile superstition. Oh how abject is the pretence that the human mind wants mystery,—how hypocritical to invent the very toys to feed it,—when the great Mystery is disfigured by their littleness and obscured by their doting!

In the matter of the only Mystery worthy of the name, the Mystery of godliness, we are not taken by surprise. Every other sinks as into nothing before its presence. It is foretold us that it is a great mystery. The announcement coincides with the character of Him who is its subject. He is the Wonderful. No one knoweth who the Son is but the Father. Every step of such a Being must be in darkness. Let him cover himself with light as with a garment,—only is he the more difficult of vision. But has the alternative been considered by those who taunt us with our excessive credulity? A man deified and worshipped! A man the universal judge! Invested with all power in heaven and in earth! Sharing the throne of the Father! Attracting the praise of angelic hosts and of redeemed throngs! Is this simple and happy? Is this the perfect abhorrence of the difficult and the absolute

dread of the obscure? Our part is taken. Our choice is fixed. Be it, that we are enslaved to the superstition of confessors and martyrs, apostles and prophets,—be it, that we are strangers to the charms and prospects of a free-thinking philosophy,—be it, that we halt behind the spirit and illuminations of the age,—be it, that we are fools for Christ's sake! The mystery which others treat with scorn, we survey with adoration. Instead of being ashamed of it, we glory in it. The shadows of others may please them; the depths, the depths, without soundings and without shores, for us! Such mysteries might be expected from the purpose of an eternity, they might be expected from the combination and sympathy of the divine attributes, they might be expected from the common subordination of all earthly events and ages, they might be expected from the astonishment of the highest intelligences of the universe, they might be expected from the complacency and delight of the Deity, his boast and exultation! We do not attach more wondrousness to the theme than the Scriptures constantly labour to do. We cannot attach to it the interest with which heaven always regards it. What we understand by the Mystery is infinitely less than what the Mystery means. But it shall open for ever! We feel it true to our nature to follow on to know the Lord. Its best aspirations kindle at the hope. Its wings seem to stretch themselves, as with a strong instinct, for the rapture. Finite, we are made to fly towards the infinite. Our immortality dictates it. And since the reasonableness of all our future being must depend upon a sufficient study and employment, here we find a scale for its eternal expatiations! Thou Mystery of godliness, be to us a theme for endless thought and song! Thou God manifested in thy manhood, Thou Man justified in thy Godhead, we will give thanks unto thee for ever!

SERMON VII.

THE RESEMBLANCE OF MELCHISEDEK TO CHRIST.

Heb. vii. 21.

The Lord Sware and will not repent, Thou art a Priest for ever after the Order of Melchisedek.

There is something very solemn in the thought that a man shall be lifted above his generation, moulded distinct from all his contemporaries, and thus stand out, not in respect of his own interest, but with a reference to some personage of a remote futurity,—a pledge that he shall arise, a portraiture of his character and a specimen of his history. These instances are but few, and only appear in relation to Him who was to come, and to the purposes of his mission. Prophet does not announce and foreshadow prophet. Christ only is thus predicted and prefigured. And this must always be remembered that, in examining the narrative of them who thus were appointed to signify Him beforehand, we are bound to connect all these indications primarily with the persons themselves. They run their course of living and responsible acts. They may be quite unconscious that they are harbingers of that expected one. They may never have passed in imagination beyond their individual and relative obligations. And equally must it be remembered that, in the direction given to their character and history, no possible violence is done to their liberty. The

Spirit of a sound mind only developes the native germ and element by consistent motive and under intelligent influence. But we behold them in their proper stations and at their distant intervals, the mute yet the not less expressive, the dim yet the not less certain, types which anticipate and represent the Son of God. Their faces are ever turned to Him. We recognise his progress from their peculiar bias and attitude, as from flowers we can dial the course of the sun. From their place and manifestation we learn his approach, as from the position of the stars during the night we can compute the morrow's dawn. So regarding them, how interesting is the narrative of all their circumstances and deeds! We follow them with renewed pleasure and with labouring suspense, from scene to scene. However minute the transaction, it is full of meaning. These ancients are invested with a mysteriousness that not only awakens our curiosity but commands our awe. But how dull becomes the tale, how trivial the biography, when this application is denied! It is an obtrusion of littleness on our attention. The humble citizen is arrayed in royal attire. The domestic hearth is kindled into a public beacon. Nothing, however, can be inconsiderable, nothing indifferent, nothing too incidental, nothing too personal, when all is but the index to a Saviour, for whom are all things,—when all is but the uplifted signal of an Event unparalleled in the annals of time and the revolutions of eternity. Hence our sympathy with men who otherwise would be very inferior figures of the historic stage: who could never have attained, for any other reason, to niche or pedestal in the temple of fame. But when we ask them each,—"Art thou He that should come?" they all enjoin and all assist us to look for another. Their testimony is unanimous, "I am not the Christ. He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me." They cast not their own shadow. They live not to themselves.

It is very important, in all these examinations, to hold fast as a first principle that the correspondence which is supposed is not of the Messiah to any earlier personages, but of them to Him. He is the Prototype. Theirs only is the conformity. Like the morning-planet that announces and catches the first light of the sun, these herald and reflect Him to whom they are so mysteriously bound. And we might suppose that there was something almost arbitrary in the appointment of these representatives of the Messiah. As in the selection of his apostles, "He called unto him whomsoever he would." But wisdom, fitness, and moral arrangement, shine most distinctly in their mission. The correspondence is always easy, natural, and fixed. New images are presented of the Original: reiterated preludes of warning and announcement resound along the line of march, and proclaim the hastening approach of the Deliverer!

Type is not so frequently an intelligent, moral, accommodation and coincidence, as artificial parallelism of rite and usuage. It is not so often of persons as of things. But the scope may be complex: there may be the bold relief of the man along with the mystic purport of the institution. Both combine in the Text. Priesthood is shown to attach to the Saviour and to be intended to describe his mediatorial undertaking: that priesthood is further specified as following the pattern of a particular priest. This is the method of our Discourse.

I. WE SEE IN THE OFFICE OF PRIESTHOOD AN IDEA AND A PRINCIPLE WHICH EXCLUSIVELY BEAR UPON THE INCARNATE MANIFESTATION AND REDEEMING WORK OF JESUS CHRIST.

From the beginning the function of offering sacrifice was known and practised. The individual might act it for himself. It soon became vicarious. It grew into a service and a dignity. It widely, if not universally, obtained. Where it is now unknown, a Deity is not acknowledged,

and both ideas have evidently been lost, and must have declined together. It is still most commonly recognised. The conception of its meaning and design is easily received. It pervades every form of language and every association of thought. The characteristics of this ministration can only just be enumerated; though the enumeration, we must bear in mind, has exclusive respect to the revealed and heaven-ordained priesthood.

It was *religious*. All adoration and piety were founded upon it. They only acquired rule and acceptance in it. They were mere sentiments and performances of will-worship without its sanctity and sanction.

It was *representative*. He who was invested with it was "ordained for men in things pertaining to God." But this was not all: he was rather appointed between heaven and the people, than between the people and heaven.

It was *divinely conferred*. "No man taketh this honour unto himself; but he that is called of God." It was regulated by the strictest provisions. Tribe and family were the security for the directness of its succession and the authority of its discharge.

It was imparted by *solemn induction*. The candidate must pass through many ceremonials the most solemn and impressive. He must repair to the laver and to the altar: he must be compurgated by sacrifice and anointed by chrism. His unworthiness and his accountability were enforced on his mind by these humbling and consecrating preparations.

It resolved itself into invariable duties.

1. *To offer sacrifice*. "Every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices." "Gifts" were oblations of a votive and eucharistic kind: "sacrifices" were the inflictions of death upon a victim with confession of sin and hope of expiation. The flowers which grew just on the border of Eden might suffice for the one: the first-

lings of the earliest folded flock were demanded for the other. Cain could present his wreaths and clusters with an unbroken heart and unbelieving boast: Abel, in the "fuller sacrifice" of the palpitating and bleeding lamb, proved his consciousness of guilt and that he looked beyond himself for an atonement. But this rite is most singular.

—It cannot have originated in any human reasoning. As a *substitution*, how could that which is incapable of sin be accepted in room of the sinner? As a *compensation*, how could animal suffering, apart from all the proper effects of evil on a moral nature, be allowed to counterweigh the just penalty of the law? As an *attraction*, how could a divine complacency be imagined in a waste of life given to be enjoyed, and, though always intended to be perishable, unforfeited by sin? What is there in the operations of Nature to favour the idea? What is there in the analogies which ever raise themselves between our intellectual convictions and material impressions? What is there in our ordinary conceptions and judgments? It is something strange, to our first view unlikely, and which is to be forced upon us. Say, that all nations agree in it,—that does not establish its spontaneous suggestion. Every nation records it as a prescribed and revealed means of propitiation. It existed beyond the memory of any people. Grant that it is a discovery of Infinite Wisdom, and all is plain and consistent. It was made known in its original purity of meaning and exercise. Truth was forsaken, but its form was not altogether lost in the dispersion of man. The light of tradition was refracted most perversely, but it was not entirely quenched.

—It cannot be justified but upon some indemnifying principle. We immediately allow the right of the Creator over all that he has made. "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of

the field are mine." But this very claim prepares us for his ulterior demand: "Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?" His tender mercies are over all his works. Towards the meanest creature, even the most short-lived, he deals in considerate and lavish benignity. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?" "Doth God take care for oxen?" "And should I not spare Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six-score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand? and *also much cattle?*" It cannot be the caprice of power. But if some high principle of His government be meditated, if an infinite amount of spiritual happiness be thus secured, if the salvation of man, for whose benefit all these inferior tribes were produced, be manifestly involved, then, what is the expense of their life and blood,—falling as this expense most assuredly does under the condition of original being,*—in comparison of ends which can only heed them as the merest accessories or the humblest illustrations?

—It cannot be maintained for its possession of any inherent virtue. Sin presents a most serious evil. No

* It is to be regretted that many, in reading this passage, "Wherefore as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin,"—though it is limited by the following sentence, "so death passed upon all *men*,"—have thus thought to explain the death of the inferior animals. They argue that these die because of our sin. It is a supposition to make the mocker strong. For we find organic remains of unknown creatures, whose existence must have been long anterior to the present condition and use of our planet. Is it not an absurdity to hold the immortality, or, which is the same thing, the deathlessness, of the insect and the worm? The revolution is not in them but in ourselves. They die as they would always die. It is their law: "the beasts that perish." We are now, by the demerits and consequences of sin, "like" them. If there had been no death, how could the menace have been understood? "Thou shalt surely die:" the example was general and notorious. In short, the animals do not die because man sinned, but because man sinned he must die even as the animals. This is not the place to show how much more is included in *his* death.

language can express its enormity. Its just, its condign, desert, no thought can conceive. There is no bolt of "tribulation, wrath, and anguish," but it necessarily draws down upon itself. To mark the abhorrence in which He holds it, God makes its "plagues wonderful." But if the sacrificial institute had been designed to terminate on itself, had it been of itself a complete system, no contrivance could have been more calculated to extenuate our views of sin. If it could "make the comers thereunto perfect," if after the offering there was "no more conscious of sin," if this was an atonement absolutely sufficient, the heinousness of all offence against the Divine law could only be an exaggerated representation. It is a most unfounded assertion that moral offence was never contemplated by ancient sacrifice. If man "did not well," "the sin offering couched at the door."* The idolatry at the base of Sinai was so included: "Moses said unto the people, Ye have sinned a great sin: and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." Different social crimes are mentioned as possibly committed by a man,—"if he lie unto his neighbour, or take a thing away by violence, or swear falsely." Is he debarred? "He shall bring his trespass offering unto the Lord: and the priest shall make an atonement for him before the Lord: and it shall be forgiven him for any thing of all he hath done in trespassing therein."† But could such offerings be truly received commutatively and piacularly for sin? We know that they could only "sanctify to the purifying of the flesh." "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins."

—It cannot be vindicated but as the prospective memorial of some great explanatory and absorbing fact. The terms are multiplied. Satisfaction, Expiation, Redemption, Ransom, Propitiation, and Atonement, are

* Gen. iv. 7. † Lev. vi. 1—7.

found in the ancient Sacrificature, either implied or affirmed; and every description is repeated of the oblations,—the trespass, the sin, the burnt, the whole burnt, the peace, offerings. Now we find counterparts of these terms in that latter part of Scripture which is history, in contradistinction to allusion, shadow, and prophecy. In one portion of the New Testament the Epistle from which the text is selected,—which might not improperly be called the book of the Christian Leviticus,—the points of resemblance are formally argued and the correlative systems minutely compared. Similar phraseology is adopted, the purport of it is rigidly examined, and what was but figure is now retained as the strict exponent of truth and fact. The ritual which had lasted four thousand years is demonstrated to have no self-existence and sufficiency: its sacrificial and sacerdotal appointments are made to determine in Christ. There never was an actual sacrifice but His: there never was a proper priest but He. A uniform style of reasoning occurs in the other sacred writings. The death of the cross, "the decease accomplished at Jerusalem," is the only interpretation and warrant of all the costly and fearful apparatus of the ancient law.

The Hebrew Pontiff was the living witness of that dispensation. He expressed its genius and embodied its character. All his duties and badges were distinctive. The temple was his home. The altar was his charge. The ephod was his authority. He was separate from all that was common and unclean. His life was a holy devotement. And when the annual day of atonement broke, that sabbath of sabbaths, then the expiations of the year seemed condensed, every image which could convey the thought of forgiveness was elaborated, and Israel was taught the doctrine of that "Blood which cleanseth us from all sin." The manner in which the offered blood was at different times applied is most worthy

of notice: now it was sprinkled on the Mercy-Seat, and then upon the People.

The Messiah is the antitype. "He has come a high priest of good things to come." His temple was his own Body. His altar was his own Divinity. His ephod was his own Authority. Yet in abasement and œconomic subordination, "He glorified not himself to be made a high priest." The blood of his sacrifice realises the two-fold use of the emblem: it is the blood of sprinkling,—toward the Divine Throne for its honour and vindication, for its exercises of justice and mercy,—toward the penitent sinner for his relief and hope, for his obedience of faith and love.

2. *To present Intercession.* The priests, the ministers of the Lord, might weep between the porch and the altar: but our attention is turned to an advocacy more efficacious and direct. The high priest went alone into the Holiest once every year. There he stood with the vessel of the victim's blood in the one hand and with the censer of frankincense in the other. He bowed in breathless adoration. No form of words did he repeat. Silent, significant, actions were his only prayer. The breastplate was "on his heart," and its gems burnt beneath the glory-cloud. Yet to the waiting multitude assurance was given of his dread employment. "His sound was heard." The sweet chime of the bells which hung from his skirt testified his every movement. He was arrayed and appointed to entreat for all the tribes. He was empowered by sacrifice. This gave him his right of access and his weight of plea.

"We have such a High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." His sacrifice is single and complete. It cannot be repeated. But it is continually presented. "He now appeareth in the presence of God for us." He need not beseech. Utterance is not required. He hath entered into the

heavenly places not without blood. The heavenly things themselves have been purified by that blood. He is a Lamb as it had been slain, newly immolated, yet living with all the wounds of recent slaughter, "*standing* in the midst of the throne." And surely it is strange that this perpetual intercession should be accounted by any as derogatory from the efficacy of his death. Honour is thus accorded to it as the constant basis of mercy. It is a ceaseless remembrance and celebration of the cross. It is the triumph of the atonement in the acknowledgment of its claims and the diffusion of its virtues. When this "Blood speaketh,"—importunity and vehemence cannot describe its voice,—suggestion and argument cannot explain its appeal,—it is intercession and not demand, advocateship and not challenge,—but then it is only as a deference to the eternal principles and rights of holiness and justice, as the confession that such a gracious arrangement need not have been allowed, and as the orderly succession of claims founded on an infinite desert. It is the sign and the force of His "unchangeable priesthood." Beautiful is the invitation of the Father to the Son: "Ask of me!" Unfailing are the assurances of Jesus to his people: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you." "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son." The Sacred Writings, so far from supporting the idea that the intercession of Christ bears unfavourably upon the honour of his death, reason in exactly the contrary way: "Wherefore *He is able* to save them to the *uttermost* that come unto God by him, *seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for us.*"

3. *To pronounce Benediction.* "The Lord separated the tribe of Levi to bless in his name."* "Aaron lifted up his hand toward the people, and blessed them."† The language is preserved.‡ It seems the outline of Christian

* Deut. x. 8. † Lev. ix. 22. ‡ Numb. vi. 23, &c.

formula. But it was not to be given until the sacrifice had bled and until the incense was kindled. The more painful and anxious ministrations were first to be accomplished. During their performance he was clothed in his most common garb. Only in that linen tunic was he admitted within the veil. It was a day of mourning. All reminded of sin and called to contrition. But the atonement being made, the intercession being accepted, he came forth from his dread retirement, and prepared to appear before the people in all the sumptuous habiliments of his office: the robe of embroidery, the binding of woven work, the hem of blue and purple and scarlet, "the curious girdle" of gold and fine twined linen, the golden plate of the mitre, the holy crown glittering above all. Then standing at the gate of the temple, he poured forth this benison of deep meaning and presage upon the bending crowd, who were praying without and awaiting his return.

Our Lord, clothed in the days of his flesh with poverty and humiliation, seen in the form of a servant and the fashion of a man, having laid aside the ensigns of his glory,—has now gone into heaven. His array on earth was for abasement, for sacrifice. "Many were astonished at him." He is now within the veil, and the heaven has closed upon him as the curtain hid the most holy place. His intercession there is the cause and source of all spiritual blessings. We saw him pass from the altar of the cross, his vesture dipped in blood, to the penetralia of the celestial temple with its throne and its ark and its glory. Even then he lifted up his hands and blessed us: and while he blessed us he was parted from us. He "has for us entered" that mysterious chamber, "into heaven itself." The perfect benediction remains, then, to be vouchsafed. "To them who look for him shall He appear the second time without a sin-offering unto salvation." He shall come in his glory. He shall be girded with the

richest garments of his excellent ministry. He shall cover himself with all his honours and surround himself with all his angels. But it shall be a priestly act. It is his return in like manner as we have seen him go into heaven. When shall the tapestry of this vaulted sky dispart and reveal the Crowned Priest?

Perfect analogies we cannot expect in relations like these. The law was the "shadow," but not the "perfect image." In the priesthood of our Saviour there must be peculiarities which cannot be reflected nor transferred.

It is *real.* The title is not allusively conferred upon Him because it is common and known. Whatever is common and known in the title is only derived from his office. He is not thus distinguished because men have been styled in this manner: they were so styled in reference and honour to him.

It is founded on *His actual death.* The ancient priests slew the clean beasts and birds for the offering. They saw in the infliction the death they might have died, but for the atonement which their services adumbrated. But he "laid down his life." "He gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God." He was at the same time victim and priest. He was "made perfect," or consecrated to his work, "by sufferings."

It is strictly *meritorious.* There could be no congruity between the hecatomb and the effacement of human guilt. But in the death of Christ is a moral strength and right which the Scripture most emphatically describes. God is therefore said to "bring him again from the dead, through the blood of the everlasting covenant." Justice is justified, and the detention of the grave is incompatible with the true claims of the captive. His blood or death insists upon their admission. "Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." The preposition* is in these parallelisms the same: we may

* Διὰ.

rather translate it, "by means of," "on account of," "for sake of," than "for." He was "surrendered" on account of our offences, having made himself obnoxious to their penal consequences: he was released on account of our absolvement of any further penal consequences. So long as there was penalty due, he was *held:* so soon as that penalty was exhausted, he was *discharged.* So long as our sins were upon him, he was still "delivered:" when we were justified, nothing being "against us and contrary to us," he was exonerated. Our justification becomes his acquittance as our offences became his liability. What a mighty proof is found in these inspired quotations of the perfection of His priesthood!

It is most *tender in its design.* The typical priest was required to "have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that were out of the way; for that he himself also was compassed with infirmity." "And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself to offer for sins." "The law maketh men high priests which have infirmity." These passages make us acquainted at a glance, with the grace and kindness of the priestly institute. This was no small reason for Christ to take the office. But it was not on the stated grounds that He could have compassion and could easily condescend. He needeth not to offer for himself. His purity is his first qualification: "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." But, then, from all the conflicts which established that purity there arises a transcendent sympathy: "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."

It is associated with all *other necessary offices.* His suretyship of the new covenant involves these relations. He is priest, prophet, and king. Melchisedek was a priest and a king, but not a prophet: Samuel was a prophet and a

priest, but not a king: David was a king and a prophet, but not a priest. All these high trusts and duties unite in him who is the Prophet raised up unto us, the High Priest of our profession, and the King set upon the holy hill of Zion.

The PRIESTHOOD of our Lord Jesus is affirmed to be ETERNAL.

It may be mooted, When did it begin? And in many conceivable views we may think of it as that which eternally was. He was the Lamb verily foreordained before the foundation of the world. He was saluted as priest amidst the ancient dispensations. Abel, Aaron, Zadok, Eliakim, Joshua, in their shadowy lineage, betokened his actual power. When He descended to earth he came to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. He offered up himself. But priesthood is "honour." He therefore did not assume it with all its dignities in the days of humiliation. He rather was the victim. He made himself of no reputation. "He glorified not himself to be made a high priest." Heaven is the proper sphere of its more magnificent functions. "If He were on earth, he should not be a priest." There is the Holiest! He is "the Minister" of that "Sanctuary," that "true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man!" There is "the blood of sprinkling!" He hath "obtained eternal redemption for us!" There is the golden altar of much incense! The golden censer is in His hand! The smoke ascendeth up before God! It is a never-ceasing cloud! He is a priest for ever! His holy garments are for glory and beauty! He is cinctured by the golden girdle! The crowns for a memorial are set upon His head!

The Eternal perpetuity of His priesthood which the Text affirms, must as a fact embrace certain consequences which may be readily defined. It is not the exaggeration or poetry of truth, but a simple statement of it. What does it involve?

1. The influence of the Atonement and Intercession of Jesus Christ is supposed in the one idea of Mediation. Merit and moral power are its effects. To this we owe all that justifies and cleanses the soul. We must ascribe to the same source the blessing of eternal life. Such an Office can never cease to operate. Let us think of heaven and of the redeemed there. They are not as though they had never sinned. They are not in a state which speaks to them of innocence. Their heaven is full of sign and sound declaring to them absolved guilt and conquered depravity. They are the nations of the *saved*. They move as in the atmosphere of sacrifice and incense. They sing: "Thou hast *redeemed* us to God by thy blood." Bright as is the glory, "the *Lamb* is the light thereof." Through eternity the Death of the Saviour must be the ground of all title to happiness and of all qualification for it. The exercises of his priesthood shall be modified, but its mediatory character and infinite desert can never change: forth from it shall be effused an efficacy to be felt by every ransomed spirit at each step of its infinite progression and in each moment of its immortal being. "He is a High Priest of *good things to come*," blessings which shall evolve through an endless future.

2. The union of the Divine and Human natures in the person of Immanuel, as necessary to his priesthood, cannot if that priesthood be eternal, admit of termination. His substitution can know no basis but in his assumption of our nature. To become incarnate was necessary to establish the right principle: "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of *one*." And thus only the sacrificial act could be secured: "He was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of *death*." His body, once mysteriously prepared for him, he has borne with him to his throne. It is the glorious model according to which his risen followers shall be conformed. An excellence, a beauty, a ravishing sweetness, consists in the

vision of such a person, concerning which we can only so far pronounce, that it is the joy and wonder of heaven, that it constitutes heaven, that it is Deity best honoured and illustrated, that it is seen of angels, that it awakens the unpausing halleluiahs of the saints.

3. Whatever be the honours and rewards of His priesthood they shall be eternal. "His obedience unto death, even the death of the cross," is the basis and pledge of all that distinctive glory which consists in the general idea of his exaltation. "He shall be exalted, and extolled, and be very high." He is "a priest upon his throne." His robe of light shall not decay. His tiara shall not dim. We may look deeper into this truth. There shall be a manifestation of principles, arising out of his incarnate and mediatorial work, which can only gather strength and clearness through all duration. He will be glorified in their exhibition and influence. There has also been brought by Him to his heavenly kingdom a countless multitude of redeemed sinners of our race. These were once enemies: all of them were alienated from the favour and the service of God. By his priesthood he has reconciled them to both. They have access to the divine presence and sympathy with the divine will. They stand forth before Him. He shall see his seed. They have become a holy, votive, nation: a royal priesthood, priests of God and of Christ. They offer themselves a living sacrifice. They offer to God the sacrifice of praise continually. Every effect of his Priestly intervention is realised in them whose reflected priesthood evinces a perfect restoration of their nature from all the impiety and banishment of their fall. "They shall be as though He had not cast them off."

II. We proceed to consider that particular rule or arrangement in which the high-priesthood of Christ is constituted and declared.

It is necessary to collect, if we would form a proper

and consistent judgment, whatever is recorded of Melchisedek; from his first appearance in sacred history, until he is made in far later inspired Scripture the subject of allusion and illustration.

The first notice of him we find in the book of Genesis.* Chedorlaomer was a mighty potentate, holding many kings in subjection and tribute in the year of the world, 2091. Among these vassals were the five Kings of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zeboim, and Bela or Zoar. These threw off his yoke. The potentate, allying to himself other powers, proceeded to inflict his summary vengeance upon their disaffection. As he approached, they gave him battle. Their military position was bad, and they were put to rout. Lot fell into the hands of the foe. Abraham, hearing that his brother was a captive, armed his retainers, reconquered the too confident spoiler, returning with the trophies and amidst the greetings of a deliverer. The story now begins. "And the king of Sodom went out to meet him. And Melchisedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And the king of Sodom said unto Abraham." Here we must remark, that no difference at all is imagined between these kings as actual, reigning, princes. They are the well-known kings of equally well-known places. They fall under the self-same sensible cognizance and historic notation. They are spoken of in the same way. One produces no more surprise than the other, however unequal the interest we feel in them. They alike are men.—Moreover, Melchisedek not only reigned as did the neighbour-kings, but was the founder of a dynasty. Kings were traced in descent from him or in succession to him. In the book of Joshua we read of "Adonizedec, King of Jerusalem."† Adon is often as kingly as Malec, and frequently more illustrious. There is no mention of the priesthood, but

* Chap. xiv. 18. † Chap. x. 1, &c.

the royal line is preserved. The original style is retained, though the monarchy was sunk into idolatry. It perished at Makkedah, but it had continued nearly five hundred years.

The name seems lost for ages, when in one of the songs of Zion* it is renewed. That the hallowed ode relates to the Messiah is proved by the challenge of the Messiah himself.† And this is the strain of salutation: "The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek." All that we now observe is, that such an avowal of this typic model is unexpected and abrupt; but that it was most comely, it having been affirmed, to insert it among compositions which were of daily perusal in the House, and were consecrated by the solemn minstrelsy of the Temple.

Upon this quotation the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews comments in a manner quite unprecedented among inspired writers, educing an elaborate argument and a minute comparison. A high and reverent importance is obviously felt by him in all that pertains to the subject. It is to him a theme of surpassing interest and magnificent conception.

There are but two interpretations which it is necessary for us to examine.‡ The first respects Melchisedek as Christ himself. Authorities neither mean nor few are

* Psa. cx. † Matt. xxii. 43, passim.

‡ To show how speculation has gone wild upon this matter, a passage may be transcribed from Tertullian. "Alter post hunc, Theodotus hæreticus erupit, qui et esse introduxit alteram sectam, et ipsum hominem Christum tantummodo dicit ex Spiritu Sancto, et Virgine Maria conceptum pariter et natum; sed hunc inferiorem esse, quam Melchisedek, eo quod dictum sit de Christo: Tu es sacerdos in æternum secundem ordinem Melchisedek. Nam illum Melchisedek præcipue gratiæ celestem esse virtutem; eo quod agat Christus pro hominibus, deprecator et advocatus ipsorum factus, Melchisedek facere pro celestibus angelis atque virtutibus; nam esse illum usque adeo Christo meliorem, ut apator sit, ametor sit, agene-alogetus sit, cujus neque initium, neque finis comprehensus sit, aut comprehendi possit."—*Adver: Om: Hæret: Libellus.*

found upon the side of this hypothesis. It is to be tried in the same manner as if these authorities were more protective, or as if there were none.

On the supposition that this was Christ himself, the manifestation must fall within those visions, sudden and brief, in which he sometimes appeared to the fathers. We doubt not that he thus showed himself to our great ancestor in Paradise, to him on other occasions whom the royal priest welcomed and blest, to Jacob, to Moses, and to Joshua. These were mystical, spectral; like the flashing and expiring meteor, they come and go. They have no subsistence in them. They are phantasmata in the unearthliness of their character and in the rapidity of their flight. Let us, then, enquire whether the appearance of Melchisedek can be brought under such a description of vision. Salem was a place, a city, a kingdom. Its people must have been acquainted with their chief. He was king of it. He was as much king of it as were the kings of border-states among whom he is introduced. He lived and ruled in the seat of his government, and must have been known by all the acts of its administration. His priesthood, as a peculiarity in his person, would make him more notorious. Now had he burst upon the father of the faithful at once,—a visioned being, unrelated to history, unknown to man,—he might have only revealed himself as Christ had often done: he might have been that Christ. But he was the historic, the recognised, head of a local monarchy, with its subjects and its dominions. Did Christ then incarnate himself in one who resided on earth, who fulfilled the course of a mortal person and the term of a human life? Did Christ thus reign in a civil capacity, and slay the sacrifice? Did he take place among the pageant-potentates of man? Did he accept spoils? He could not possess himself of this prince's body and soul to supersede him: if Christ were in him, there was none other

Melchisedek. But the king of Salem was not the unsubstantial appearance: in every sense he is a man, going in and out before his fellows, a public functionary, seen daily at altar and on throne. A royal dynasty springs from him. If he be identical with Him who was to come, then there will be a necessity upon us to believe that Christ was now incarnate ages before the fulness of times when he was "made of a woman," that he reigned secularly and offered literally, that he governed just like any other ruler and ministered just as any other priest, then existing in the world! You cannot escape from this conclusion into any unreal manner and modification of appearance: all is individually delineated, chronicled, acted out, sustained, in that being, whoever he may prove. If it be the Lord Jesus Christ, "He is made flesh and dwells among us."

Nor does the temper with which this manifestation is regarded by Abraham support the idea of its supernatural structure. When such visions have broken upon the holy and the good, they have stricken them with wondering awe. They have enforced on their spectators adoring homage. "Draw not nigh hither!" "Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God." When "the Captain of the Lord's host" appeared to the son of Nun, the leader of Israel "fell on his face to the earth, and did worship." "Loose thy shoe from off thy foot; for the place whereon thou standest is holy. And Joshua did so." When the Superior Power of any vision was not discriminated until it was dispelled, deep concern took hold of them who thus had ignorantly borne themselves. "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not." "And Jacob called the name of the place Peniel: for I have seen God face to face." "Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God." It is not in this wise that "the friend of God" is impressed. Not a word marks his recognition of the Divine Personage.

He pays no obeisance. He is overwhelmed with no amazement. Not a word of reverent allusion falls from him in any future period. He offers no worship. Yet the Saviour has declared: "Your father Abraham desired * to see my day: and he saw it and was glad." This must be the manifestation, if by the name and in the form of Melchisedek He did visibly make known himself. Yet not a trace of proof agrees to that opinion. When saw Abraham the day of Christ? "He offered up Isaac, his only begotten son:" "from the dead he received him in an allegorical representation."† The whole was a typical device. There was the man-victim, bound, laid upon the altar, the fuel heaped around him,—the sacrificing knife was uplifted, the sacred fire glowed in readiness to consume the offering and the pile. The immolation is arrested: reviviscence is figured as well as death. It was a course of significant action, preintimating the death and the resurrection of the Saviour. It was "his day," the period of his mission being put for the mission itself. In that mount the Lord was seen, or this shadowy transaction was ocularly witnessed. Abraham "saw it." This is clearly distinguished as the event. Had the apparition of Melchisedek been "God manifest in the flesh," that had been, beyond all dispute, "the day" reflected forward on the eager patriarch, which he saw and which gladdened him.

But the pen of inspired annotation leaves many a statement, which is incompatible with the identity of this monarch-priest with our Divine Lord.

If the Redeemer's priesthood follow "the order" of Melchisedek, the general inference and the natural im-

* John viii. 56. Though Αλαλλιαω is employed and not Ιμειρω, yet, as the conjunction ινα follows, vehement desire, rather than exultation, must be understood: the more so, as, otherwise, there is repetition,—"rejoiced," "was glad."

† "Εν παραβολη."

pression will be that the "order" is of another; for awful asseveration does not seem required to confirm that he is constituted after his own.

It is not a small difficulty which they who favour such a notion must be required to overcome, that Melchisedek is said to be "made like unto the Son of God." Resemblance may exist between different parties, but ordinary modes of speech are foreign to the averment that any one is "made like unto" himself. We may act in character, be self-consistent, preserve an even tenour, but a process of assimilation supposes a model from without, and independent of us, to which we are conformed.

To convince us that here are the individual distinctions which the "order" and the "likeness" would lead us to suppose, we are informed: "After the similitude of Melchisedek there ariseth *another* priest." We know, of course, from the contextual reasoning, that he is not the antecedent,—this different priest is not of Levi but of Judah. Yet is He, "of whom these things are spoken," plainly declared as "arising," as personally distinct from all beside, not Melchisedek returned, but only according to his ancient rule, without any national or tribunal connection with him.

We feel no disposition to reduce "the greatness of this man." But we need not in any justice to his character invest him with vague and indefinite mystery. "Of whom," writes the apostle, "we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered," or explained. But those "many things" he, nevertheless, proceeds to "say:" those "hard" things he immediately prepares to "explain." When we recollect that they involve the whole doctrine of the Messiah's priesthood, when we recollect the prejudices of the believing Hebrews, we may well understand his embarrassment. There is no warrant for the supposition that he reserves a single point.* He fully discusses all.

* The statement, "Of whom we have many things to say," &c., is in the

Nothing is withdrawn. He must show them the inferiority of their priesthood even to another human order. He must convince them of "the weakness and unprofitableness" of their œconomy. Now in what view of the history dwells any doubtful, strange, peculiarity? And why does the argument open slowly and cautiously? "Seeing ye are dull of hearing," or apprehension. The wondrousness is not in the person: the difficulty is subjective. There is slowness of heart to believe. They are children when they ought to be men.

We dispute not that some other difficulties may be shaped against our belief that this is a Type, only a type; but all these will be included in the scheme of interpretation which the following arrangement will dictate.

1. It seems probable, though we would lay upon it no undue stress, that the fragmentary history of Melchisedek was not destitute of design. A sort of ambiguity belongs to it, not inherent in it as a whole, but because it is so singularly told. The curtain rises, there passes before us the suddenly appareled actor, but ere we can discern his intent, it drops. The stranger crosses our path, but as we would enquire his anxious errand, he disappears. The star shoots along the firmament, and all again is dark. Advantage seems taken of this sudden emergence, this undeveloped character, to give greater depth of resemblance to that Prototype whom it respects. "Wherefore is it that thou dost ask after my name?" "No one knoweth who the Son is." "As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father." "He hath a name written, that no one knoweth, but he himself."

2. "The order" of this priesthood was doubtless primæval. There is no disproof from chronology that Melchisedek might be Shem, "the father of all the

5th Chap. of Hebrews: he "says" and "explains" all those things in the 7th. There is no intimation that he keeps back any thing he might otherwise have adduced.

children of Eber." He lived five hundred years after the flood. We know that in him is the direct genealogy of Christ. But this is unimportant to our argument. It was assimilated to patriarchal service. It was that religion. Long before the Levitican ritual was given, the same "pattern" prevailed. The saints, anterior to the age of Noah, distinguished between the clean and unclean animals: "All things were purged by blood." When the world was restored, sacrifice instantly rose with sweet savour to heaven, the sedge yet cleaving to the ark and the newly-interpreted rainbow spanning auspiciously the firmament. The wine offering, the anointing oil, the sabbath, the complement of the tabernacle, the ark of the testimony, the cherubic emblems, all were known among the earlier postdiluvian saints. These were ancient anticipations of Judaism: they were not primarily "of Moses but of the fathers." In consistency with this original institute, doubtless was the ministry of Salem dispensed. This was the religion of the world. It was universal. Any particular restriction of it, any allocation, was, consequently, *inferior*. It was to draw it into partial arrangements and narrower bounds. It was to divert it from its wider channel. Such was the œconomy of which Abraham was the head. It arose not as any higher order; it was demanded by a necessity. The defection of mankind absolutely required a strong and national fence around that pure worship which still survived but was momentarily threatened. This expedient was not a good in itself. It was a "shutting up" though to "the faith which should be afterwards revealed." He who represented it, therefore, confessed the inferiority. He made a submission to the priestly-king who represented the only true, and, but for the encroachments of idolatry, the universally sanctioned religion. He brought him tribute. He bent for his blessing. It was a representative submission. "Levi

paid tithes in Abraham." "And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." Yet is it the magnificent and full-gloried dissolution of patriarchism. It consents, as with reluctant conviction and as with an unimpaired fidelity, to the new "order." For its abdication, it puts on robe and diadem. Melchisedek seems its ambassador, and blesses its more constrained successor. But our great High Priest shall not follow the more unworthy type. "The law was added." It could not, however, destroy the pre-existing model. The idea of that ministry was not lost. That which "was four hundred and thirty years after cannot disannul it." The Aaronic rule was defective, a temporary relief, a mere substitute: Christ shall not be "called of God a high priest" in subjection to it. The Melchisedaican class was unchanging, germinant, comprehensive, initial: it is according to its perfect idea of pontificate that Christ shall be installed.

3. The resemblance is much promoted when we observe in Type and Counterpart the union of the regal and sacerdotal dignities. This, had, we suppose, not infrequently subsisted when men, in the periods of ancient longevity, became the founders of families,—they were the rulers and priests of their descendants. The life of man being abridged and his numbers being multiplied, this procedure would cease. Families grew into nations, and the rod of the patriarch was exchanged for the sceptre of the king. At this given time and after, there seem to have been certain seats of a priesthood not dissimilar to that of Canaan. We read of On and of Midian, and of their priests. Men of wealth and power possessed the right of sacrificing for their household though they held no public rank. Abraham builds his altar, and offers his victim, at every halting-place of his wanderings: Job, though not the hierophant of Uz offered burnt-offerings for his children according to the

number of them all. But monarchy and priesthood seemed incongruous appointments. By the division of the Israelites into tribes, they were formally separated. The instance of Moses is not an exception. He was the legate of heaven, "a god." All functions were found in him. He was the vicegerent of Jehovah. He was "among His priests." "He was king in Jeshurun." Yet he was rather the priest to consecrate others, than to administer, save occasionally, himself. His kingship consisted in no absolute rule: in him was the living executive of an unseen power. We, therefore, feel the novelty which attaches to the heraldry of Melchisedek. He comes forth in mixed array. He is adorned with insignia of a double glory. The gold of Havilah which is good and the topaz of Ethiopia, may have flashed from his fillet and his breastplate. The deluge-surge may have torn up from their depths the costly and mystic ornaments which now he wears. He is hierarch. Censer and sceptre are in his hand: Crown and mitre are on his head. He passes from temple to palace, from palace to temple: from throne to altar, from altar to throne. His personal name and puissant style are significant. He is king of righteousness and king of peace. His capital, notwithstanding a thousand revolutions, still endures. He was not "the mighty hunter before the Lord," the bloody tyrant, the desolating scourge: his reign was that of blameless justice and of benignant concord. The king is not lost in the priest. It is a sanctified alliance. Now our Lord is a priest for ever after this order. Had He claimed the descent of Judah, he might have been king. Had He sprung from the tribe of Levi, he might have given attendance at the altar. But in either case He could not have combined the two. But He follows the more primitive example. He asserts the twofold right. Amidst the indignities of his arraignment and crucifixion,—his own priestly acts!—the mockery of royal state was upon him,

and he declares the nature of his kingdom and adjures that he is a king. He was then offering up himself. But his kingdom is founded on his priesthood and gives royal authority to its efficacy. "The counsel of peace is between them both." "He is a Prince and a Saviour." "He is both Lord and Christ." "He is Head over all things to the church, and the Saviour of the body." He is "King of righteousness." "The sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre." He is "King of peace." "His name shall be called the Prince of peace." "He is our peace." "He hath made peace by the blood of his cross." So when He appeared in Patmos the robe he wore was equally indicative of royalty and priesthood: the two-edged sword might show the one, and the golden girdle the other: now is he seen as priest among the seven burning candlesticks,—then as sovereign, having the keys of death and of hell!

4. The priesthood of Salem knew no separating demarcation. It regarded man with perfect impartiality. It was in uncircumcision. It had a local precinct. So likewise had the other similar ministries. But patriarchal service was of a world-wide character. Not then was there a nation cast off. Not then was there a nation chosen. We would by no means insinuate that Judaism was repulsive and forbidding. Our convictions are that it was the only method to preserve the true faith, that it was not only the safe asylum of that faith but the open asylum for every believer, that it was circumscribed for guardianship and not for exclusion. Still it was a covenant of peculiarity. It was of a people. It was provincial and national. It was a bulwark of political usages and institutions. If it was not its tendency, its practical effect was a rejection of all others. The day of atonement was only solemnised for the congregation. No service of priesthood bore a general aspect. That could not be, consequently, the

specimen of the Redeemer's "order." In him the Gentiles were to trust. Of his death the last prophetic afflatus of the Jewish priesthood, speaking by its blind and malignant organ, declared: "that Jesus should die not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad." The high altar of Calvary is covered with the "propitiation for the sins of the whole world." The breastplate of our High Priest is inscribed with all peoples. There is henceforth no middle wall of partition. Rival distinctions of speech, climate, and complexion, are abolished. Nor is this anomalous. It is but a reverting to principles older than Judaism. "Abraham is ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledges us not." Christ disowns the restriction. He emulates a freer and a more gracious model, a purer and a more inceptive form: "he is after the order of Melchisedek."

5. This order of priesthood involves an entireness and self-independence. It is pronounced by the Historian that "he was the priest of the most High God." The inspired commentator dilates upon this ministry in words confessedly remarkable: "Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life: he abideth a priest continually," or uninterruptedly. We may premise from language so strong as this, that his office was immediately conferred, and that it could not possibly be alienated. Though the patriarchal religion, it was not of patriarchal extraction or entail. If he were Shem, his birth in a former world, his long ministration in the new, might give a colour of no extraordinary license to the repudiation of ancestry and succession, his priesthood having begun so far back and in such a mysterious past, and claiming many ages of the newly-reckoned epoch for its duration. It was not intended to survive him. Among such a people it is most

wonderful that, even with his prerogatives and his excellencies, he could maintain it. With him it could only lapse! If Melchisedek were a Canaanite, we may still more readily understand why he is described as without parentage and genealogy; why, in words elsewhere used, his "descent was not counted;" the idea being, all through the argument, not of course that he was without "descent," but without recorded, and sacredly commemorated, "descent." For the wickedness of this people was exceeding great. It had long been growing to its height. Religion seemed utterly lost among them. He had been consecrated at once by God. The general impiety existed probably long before his birth. No holy eldership might there be from which he could spring. No holy successor amidst the universal defection could he leave. He stands the first, the last, of a particular ministry,—warning the people ere their judgment fall, and hailing in a new line the creation of a priesthood which, in after ages, should revert to this self-same land, not then as now a witness against its present guilty inhabitants, but the boast of its new settlers, who should be a nation of priests. Were the language designed only to convey his holy absorption in his office, we might quote the not altogether discordant description of Levi: "Who said unto his father and to his mother, I have not seen them; neither did he acknowledge his brethren, nor knew his own children." But the more certain and natural interpretation seems to be, the perfect insulation of his priesthood. It was underived and untransmitted. Now two things were required of every Jewish priest: his pedigree and his age. The first insisted on the purity of their paternal and maternal lines. Their age also must be, agreeably to the original law,* afterwards extended, from thirty to fifty years old. If the priest could not prove the exact and untainted honour of his blood by both parents,

* Numb. iv. 3, viii. 25.

according to the registers which were most sacredly preserved, he was driven from the office. Not a day was suffered to him before or after this term and prime of twenty years. Only then, and no longer, could he serve. He might not anticipate, he might not exceed, that prescribed interval between settled manhood and approaching age. There was always candidateship and always superannuation. To an Israelite, thinking upon the priesthood, the phrase, "without father, without mother," would present a most intelligible idea. He would see that there was want of the hereditary title. To him also, the phrase, "having neither beginning of days nor end of life," would offer no difficulty. He would see that the accustomed period of priestly service was disregarded. Let this canon now be applied. Melchisedek held a priesthood at once from God. It depended upon no ancestral proof. It sought not for its validity in any line. He was "without father, without mother," or sacerdotal predecessors. He is "without descent," literally without genealogy.* He founds nothing upon that which was so indispensable for the humblest servant of the Jewish priesthood. He was unfettered by the law which afterwards ordained the limitation. Such "beginning of days and end of life" were not enjoined upon him. We think that the reasoning demands of us to believe, that the absence of register and of all notice concerning the limitation of service is not treated as accidental, much less is caught at equivocally,—but that it is simply an avowal of the fact, and in a mode of speech distinctly to be understood by them who are addressed.† The priesthood, then, of the king of Salem is not of descent. It descended not to him. It descended not from him to others. In language not more bold, it is

* Ἀγενεαλογητος.

† Dr. Adam Clarke quotes from the Syriac and Arabic versions: "Whose father and mother are not inscribed in the genealogies." "He had neither father nor mother; the genealogy not being reckoned."

added, "He abideth a priest continually;" * he retired not from office, by any law respecting his age as must the later priests have done. He was bound by no regulation when to commence or when to terminate, his service. However early it began, it was conducted through his entire life. His priesthood was a happy specimen of uninterrupted consecration. Any other was a thing of delay, and then of cessation,—it might be long before the close of existence! "Of him it is witnessed that he liveth:" there is no other witness of him but as living, one active and unceasing priesthood: though really mortal, there is no "witness" of his death. But it was necessary to prove that, in the abrogation of the Jewish œconomy, the priesthood was also changed. This showed that "perfection was not by the Levitical priesthood." "There is made of necessity a change also of the law."—Let us now "consider Christ Jesus." There is no priesthood, in an absolute sense, but his. The Law made only representatives of him. These could not put away sin. All the virtues they might minister flowed from him alone. His priesthood depended not on theirs. He is not designated in reference to them, but they are so called in honour of him. The type determines not the antitype, but the antitype the type. A precedent of transmissive priesthood could not properly describe that with which he is invested: the order of Melchisedek,—"without father, without mother, without genealogy,"—is therefore selected to express its integrity. A pattern of temporary priesthood could not adequately shadow that which he executes: the order of Melchisedek, is therefore adopted—"without beginning of days and end of life,"—to denote its permanence. Christ Jesus was set up of old, from everlasting. He is consecrated for evermore. "He is not made after the law of a carnal commandment,"—a law having respect

* It is said of the sons of Aaron: "Their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations."

to the infirmity and mortality of its functionaries,—" but after the power of an endless life."

6. The oath which confirms the Saviour's " order " is calculated to give it the deepest impression. When Joseph promised the dying Jacob to fulfil his instructions concerning the burial of his remains,—" I will do as thou hast said,"—the saint, knowing how he had deceived his father in like circumstances of age and feebleness to his own, exclaimed: " Swear unto me." The son took the oath, and when craving permission of Pharaoh to undertake the necessary journey, he enforces his plea by it: " My father made me swear." He, too, exacted an oath of his brethren when he gave commandment concerning his bones. This has always been regarded a most awful test of truth. " Men verily swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is an end of all strife." The distinction may not be founded in the nature of things: it is enough that it is a general practice. Therefore the God of truth puts himself under such engagement: " Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his council, confirmed it by an oath." He sware an oath to Abraham respecting the promised seed. But this adjuration is very peculiar. It is made to his Son as priest. It is the purpose of an everlasting covenant. He thus brings himself into immediate concert with that priesthood and proclaims his fullest complacency in it. But while He honours it, and attests it, and authenticates it, his oath has special bearing on its " order." Other " priests were made without an oath." It does not seem that Melchisedek was inaugurated by such a form. Now this oath was published during the life of David. " It was since the law." It called away attention from the Levitical ordinances. It must have convinced all who listened to it, that these were less perfect than that which had forerun them, though it had for ever ceased. The institute

had passed away, but not its fixed idea. It was enshrined in the oath of the Eternal. "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent." How much of interest must be contained in this order of priesthood! How should it awaken our study! The Lord doth not lift up his hand to heaven, and swear by himself, but for that which is great and dread, and glorious! He will not afford this sanction to any dispensation and its priesthood, which is temporary national, interstitial,—but seizing the purest conception of atonement which earth could afford, — the least diverted, admixed, corrupted, by any taint of earth,—the truest idea, the simplest abstract, the surest pledge, of priesthood,—as when God pitched the awful tent at the east of Eden and wrought for the guilty, naked, fugitives, garments from their sacrifices,—honouring all this in the person and vocation of his servant Melchisedek,—"the Lord said unto my Lord,—the Lord sware and will not repent,—Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek!"

7. Nor is another descriptive feature of this early priesthood to be depreciated. That strangeness which surrounds it, simply arises from the broken and incomplete character of the narrative. It is not in any sense even the biographic sketch. It is but a segment, a single action, without reference to the extremes of human being. Nothing is guessed. That bare and abrupt account is made the basis of every reasoning. All we have to do with him is contained in that account. There consists all his typic importance. Not a single extraneous point is pressed. And this is not without its lesson. The everlasting priesthood of our Lord Jesus Christ is wholly a revelation. Any idea that illustrates it, in cypher and image, is wisdom from above. It is a conception that lies out of every field of human knowledge and enquiry. We can understand nothing in relation to it but as God shall declare it. Upon this most stinted view of Melchi-

sedek, the only view that can be obtained, a view entirely dependent upon the discovery of Scripture, must we establish every analogy that can be known between him and the Son of God: upon the far more extended, yet necessarily imperfect, informations and testimonies of Divine Truth we place our unquestioning faith in the Person and Sacrifice of the Son of God,—supplying no want of clearness by our conjectures, relieving no refusal to our curiosity by our conceits.

8. The symbols which this royal priest brought forth in meeting Abraham are not to be overlooked. It would be an unworthy interpretation of the bread and the wine, to reduce them to the purpose of food and refreshment. They were the signs of oblation. The bread was for a perpetual offering in the ancient temple, and the wine was a libation poured continually upon the ancient altar. They were the images of images, or double figures. The detention of real animal matter in the Holy Place would have been inconsistent and inconvenient: these less perishable substances represented them. It was the "bread of God offered." It was "the cup of salvation." And so Melchisedek brought them forth, the vouchers and emblems of more sanguinary rites. And when we hear that Christ is after this "order," is it vain imagination to think of Him "who took bread and brake it, who took the cup and gave it?" Was it but incident that bread and wine were before him? Were they not Paschal relics? Is their appropriation arbitrary? Is it not conformable to sacrificial law? Did not these aliments always signify the flesh and blood of sacrifice? And in our Christian Feast, that feast on sacrifice, we behold them dedicate to one commemoration,—Christ's offered, though sinless humanity! Never let us keep it in the banqueting house of his church without re-echoing "the word of the oath,"—"Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek."

O let us take refuge in this Priesthood! Let us embrace its altar! May we bend in faith and penitence over its oblation, laying our hand upon it! Let us draw near to its incense until redolent of it! By it may we present the sacrifice of praise continually! Let us present our bodies, our whole selves, a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable, unto God, which is our reasonable service!

How marvellous is the harmony of Divine Dispensation! In what a contexture do all œconomies of holy verity stand! "The king of Salem" salutes the founder of Israel who was now a sojourner in a strange land. Not far distant are its towers and walls. There shall be the seat of a new power and the metropolis of a new people. It shall be the city of the Great King. Even then "in Salem was his tabernacle," and Melchisedek was "the priest of the most high God." At last,—having stood for ages the high place of sacrifice,—it becomes "the city where our Lord was crucified." Through its streets the Lamb is led to the slaughter. "That He might sanctify the people with his own blood, he has suffered without the gate." Let every altar fall! Let every ephod rend! Let every priest retire! Generations of them who did "not minister to themselves but to us," glide away! The white-robed processions disappear! The house of Aaron and the house of Levi are no more seen! Moses stands not before the Lord! Melchisedek, the most perfect of priestly types, is lost behind the cloud of his offering and the vail of his sanctuary,—leaving but a name, and prefiguring but an order,—nobler than all the rest,—yet without virtue or merit in themselves,—absorbed of right in Him who, "because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood?" "a Son over his own House!" "The servant abideth not in the House for ever: but the Son abideth ever!"

SERMON VIII.

THE HARMONY OF CHRISTIANITY IN ITS PERSONAL INFLUENCE.

EPHES. i. 8.

WHEREIN HE HATH ABOUNDED TOWARD US IN ALL WISDOM AND PRUDENCE.

TAKE the smallest, most insignificant, most unnoticed object in nature,—the particle of sand, the blade of grass, the drop of water,—the worm, the insect,—whatever hides in the crevice of the rock or wheels imperceptible in the eddy of the air,—add to these whatever is most vast and stupendous, the mountain, the ocean, the glorious handy-work of the firmament, moons, planets, suns, vibrating in boundless space through their range of sweep and with their precision of revolution, inlaid as in a texture, marshalled as a host:—all, when presented to our eye and explained to our reason,—all, when they are not raised to our powers but when our powers are raised to them,—exhibit such traces of design, such accuracies of contrivance, such wonders of adaptation, such master-pieces and models of perfection, so evidently intended for use and so efficient to the full scope of that intention:—that the man, who can attribute all this immense magazine of fixed consequences to accident, must believe that chance is more intelligent than order, confusion more binding than system, anarchy more protective than law. So long as the human mind continues what it is, consti-

stuted to reach its conclusions by certain rules and to establish them upon certain grounds, this supposition is a too sublime abstraction for it to conceive or a too idiot babble for it to endure. Our first thinkings agree with the first dictates of religion: "O Lord! how manifold are thy works: in wisdom hast thou made them all."

There is a difficulty, which we all feel, in raising upon the frame of these remarks a higher conception. What can be greater than the material works of God? What can be more profound or more lofty than creation's depths and heights? After the most searching surveys of its ever-spreading realms, world reared above world, constellation fading before yet brighter constellation, ascending from one heaven to a higher still, what can there remain of comparison but the little and the mean? To turn from all this magnificence, must it not be to sink? Can aught but melancholy contrast await us? Can we but feel the mortifying descent? And yet if we will let the Bible school us, we must instantly admit that the volume of earth and sea and sky is so inferior to its holy page, its sublime discovery, its spiritual excellence, that the infant's primer makes a nearer approach to the dissertations of our keenest philosophers, to the records of our most comprehensive historians, to the songs of our most impassioned bards, than the one can do to the other. "He hath magnified His Word above all his name." Here we read the mystery and the good pleasure of His will. Here is the imprint of his thoughts and purposes. Here he directly reveals himself. He comes into contact, communication, negociation, with us. He built the universe to prove that he *is*. He takes a language from it to declare to us his determinations. It is but a subservient apparatus to the scheme of redemption. Not only are the *moral* perfections of the Deity signalised in the death of Christ, but he is the brightest example of the *natural*,—the power of God and the wisdom of God. And no more can

his physical works divide attention with the salvation of the gospel, than the scaffolding can steal a thought from the temple; or the platform can detain a moment's interest while the train of nobles and warriors is passing over it, with the kingly heir, for his coronation.

The Text speaks of an Abounding, a lavish munificence. It is of the exceeding riches of God's grace. With these he is thus infinitely profuse. But there is nothing of an ill-considered waste. Wisdom and Prudence are seen in the supply of adequate means, in providing for probable difficulties, in guarding against probable abuses. Glorious are the gifts; but their right application is jealously secured.

The design of this Discourse is to confute the charge against the Gospel that it acts with contrary and discordant tendencies. It is alleged that its effects, when received into our mind, are not consistent and proportionate but strive with each other and draw it different ways. We would endeavour to exhibit that, though there *is* a *variety* in these impressions and emotions, there is no incongruity: that they are self-corrective and self-adjusting: that they are adapted, however different, to put and preserve the sinner in that state of mind which is best becoming a creature so fallen and so redeemed.

And here we may derive an analogy from the external universe. In nothing is its arrangement more obvious than in the system of checks which pervade all its departments. It is a peculiarity of its laws. By attraction and repulsion, by yielding and resistance, by a diversity of antagonist powers, by a succession of inverse movements, a reaction is constantly excited and a harmonious result obtained. Such are the complex mechanics of nature. By contrary impulses the planets travel their orbits. By one law exclusive they must stagnate; by another, if unmodified, they would be driven from their path. Both are necessary to give the activity, and main-

tain the order, of their revolutions. If there were only tendency to the centre, all things would consolidate into a motionless, immoveable, mass: if the impetus were always from the centre, all things would be volatile, scattered, strewn through space: nothing kept in its place nor detained for its use. And this equilibrium depends upon forces which apparently present no phænomena in common. Still is the balance completed with so much exactness that a music, beyond the fable and too perfect for our dull ear, may be generated in endless chords: its adjustment is so nice and perfect that the addition of a single atom might disturb it even to disjoint and shatter the whole.

This Wisdom and Prudence are manifested,—

By showing with equal distinctness the divine justice and mercy.

These are not rival attributes, nor can they have needed reconciliation. Justice does not arrest the hand of mercy: Mercy does not restrain the hand of justice. Neither is the more prompt or slow: neither is the more earnest or jealous. An infinite placability is anterior to the exercises of both. God is not merciful because Christ has died, but Christ has died because God is merciful. Is justice the first care of His government? Mercy is earlier in its purpose than any government. In Redemption they are mutually administrative: "To declare His righteousness in the remission of sin." They act with no partiality, they come into no collision. Justice is such a form of good, that it exclaims: "Fury is not in me." Mercy is such an advocate of rectitude that it declares: "Surely Thou wilt slay the wicked, O God." Justice knows no enmity which mercy can calm, no frown which mercy can unbend: Mercy knows no weakness which justice can help, no connivance which justice can forbid. Mercy rather than justice superintends the Sacrifice of the Cross, charges itself with the awful preparations,

heaps the fuel, binds the victim, grasps the knife, deals the stroke, pours the libation, kindles the fire, consumes the offering,—while Justice but assents, and smiles, and "makes the comers thereunto perfect." They speak with a united voice, they command with a united authority, they shine with a united glory. Neither excels. The one does not overbear the other. Their common splendour is like the neutral tint, the effulgent colourlessness, of the undecomposed ray.

The impression on the believing sinner's mind must correspond. It might be that in another proportion of these attributes our mental balance would have been endangered. Had justice been more stern, we should have been overawed: had mercy been less holy, we might have been daringly elate. We are saved, but at what a price! We rejoice with trembling. Reverence chastens trust, and trusts endears reverence. We fear the Lord and his goodness. We ascribe forgiveness unto Him that he may be feared. And yet this fear does not banish confidence. "In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence and his children shall have a place of refuge." It is veneration without dismay: it is reliance without pretension.

This Wisdom and Prudence promote the state of mind we describe,—

By exhibiting the incarnate Son of God as alike the object of love and adoration.

That Christ should be made flesh was necessary to his becoming an atonement: scarcely less that he might be the way by which we understand and approach the Divinity. He was thus made like unto us. He was born of a woman. He dwelt among us. He had a human heart. He was beheld in a surpassing amiableness. Gracious words proceeded out of his mouth. Behold how he loved us! He mingled his tears with ours. He bore our weaknesses. He was meek and lowly in mind. And

this conception of his character, his affectionate image, is most preciously retained and embodied in sacred writ. In reading those holy records which unfold his life, we catch this conception, this image, as though we had actually followed him to where he dwelt, had hung upon his discourse, had sat at meat with him, had leaned upon his bosom. He still receiveth sinners. He is among us as one that serveth. He visiteth our home. He walketh with us by the way. We see him at the death-bed of our daughter, at the funeral of our son, at the grave of our brother, and his love never fails. We are assured of his entire sympathy. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. By unimaginable bonds he unites himself to us. "We are members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones." He calls us friends. He is not ashamed to call us brethren. He must be loved. But all these kindlier sentiments need to be chastened and hallowed. "What manner of man is this!" "We behold his glory." He is Christ Jesus the righteous. He is the Holy one, and that Just. It is he whom the seraphim adore. Let us not encroach on his glorious majesty, nor speak lightly of him. It may not always become us to press the allowance of his condescension; rigidly to enforce what his humility might suggest; to reciprocate in strict correlative every kindred name he gives us. We may hardly call him Brother, however he is the first-born among many brethren. We dare not call him Spouse of our soul, though he be the Bridegroom of the church. Our hearts are shocked by the appeal to the friends of Jesus, however henceforth he may call us friends. He is the Lord God whom we sanctify in our heart and make our fear and dread. There is a style too common in speaking of him, profanely soft, familiar, undignified, which we cannot too resolutely shun.—The influence of Art is here to be deprecated. It perpetuates the ideas which are only to be valued as they conduct us to the measure of the stature of the

fulness of Christ. "The Mother of our Lord" is fixed in the expression of her earliest maternity, and he sleeps in her bosom still the new-born babe. The sensuous of beauty is pourtrayed to the loss of the moral loveliness. Natural fondness is warmed in us rather than holy sentiment and lofty emotion. Our sensibilities are stolen, our instincts are excited, but adoration is suspended and reverence is checked. It is not Contemplation which dreams! It is not Faith which gazes! It is not Repentance which weeps! Behold your God. Let us give unto him the glory due unto his name. Let us stand in awe and sin not. Let us imitate the disciple who, when he might have reached forth his hand to the Crucified One and have thrust it into his side, forebore, touched him not, falling before his feet at once, answering and saying unto him, My Lord and my God! Let us follow the example of the celestials, the living creatures and the elders, with their harps and their censers, bowing to their faces before the Lamb! Let us vie with all the angels in worshipping him.

Blessed admixture of emotions! It is tenderness, it is gratitude, it is complacency, without a lowering thought: it is humiliation, it is subjection, it is homage, without a disconcerting fear!

The Gospel in its Wisdom and Prudence, produces this moral adjustment of our principles and feelings,—

By insisting most uniformly on divine grace and human responsibility.

In its treatment of man the doctrine it preaches is most abasing to him, but only because it represents the true facts of his case. It does not lay him low, but shows how low he lies. It can hear nothing of our merit. It dispels the darkness in which such a dream alone could fill the mind. We no more appeal to justice. We no more demand, "Give me the portion of goods that falleth to me." We compare not ourselves among ourselves. Sins

which formerly seemed little rise up into fearful magnitude. The heart which flattered us and which we palliated in return, is felt by us now to be desperately wicked. The God whom we had reduced in our ideas to a weak indulgence and even connivance, is declared by Himself to us as the jealous guardian of his own name and law. We are helpless as guilty. What things were gain are loss. Mercy now is our only cry. As we read that "surely shall one say, In the Lord have I righteousness and strength," *each* of us determines to be that *one*. Grace leaves us nothing but itself. It crowns itself. But while it regards us in this our guilt and powerlessness, it addresses us as moral agents. Not an original relationship is disturbed. We are dealt with according to one rule. The law must be fulfilled in us. We are not the less accountable creatures. In blessing Him who maketh us to differ from another, we must not forget that he is no respecter of persons. Even we are called, persuaded, commanded, to the reception of these sure mercies. A new probation is established, a further responsibility is impressed. The gospel is made known unto all nations for the obedience of faith. God now commandeth all men every where to repent. In no way is any standard of obedience reduced. No principle of obligation is relaxed. And instead of grace interfering with the grounds of subjection on which man has always stood, must always stand,—it augments to far more solemn issue all his original amenableness.

This is a most important result. Man is brought to see that there is nothing but he must receive. And then his helplessness is set forth to him as a matter of blame and guilt, for which he is liable and for which there is no excuse. How correct is the poise which such constituents of principle must establish in his mind!

This state of mind is secured,—

By the proposal of the freest terms of accept-

ANCE, AND THE ENFORCEMENT OF THE MOST UNIVERSAL PRACTICE OF OBEDIENCE.

The reign of grace, though its very name supposes that it acts in consistency with moral government, necessarily must be brought to the simplest idea of gift and its acceptance. It is "the gift by grace." The manner of obtaining it does not lessen its spontaneousness, but rather illustrates it. Do we seek it by prayer? He regards the prayer of the destitute. He delivers the needy when he crieth and him that hath no helper. Do we believe? "It is of faith that it might be by grace." Do we buy? "It is without money and without price." Do we thirst? Do we will to drink? We "take the water of life freely." Is there any reason for this grace in ourselves? We had not to pay and therefore our Lord frankly forgave us. "By grace are ye saved." We adjudge not our case truly until we renounce all thoughts of personal excellence: until we abjure the merit of our natural instincts and social virtues: until we see that, being evil, we have given good things to our children: that our ploughing has been sin. But having been justified freely by his grace, through faith without the works of the law, are we discharged from obedience? God now accepteth our works. They are accepted through the atonement. There is in us a new motive, a new life. It is not more a faithful saying, and more worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,—than it is a faithful saying, and to be constantly affirmed, that they who believe in God should be careful to maintain good works. Now commences toil, watch, warfare. There is time to redeem. There is neglect to overtake. A new plan of existence opens upon us. For us to live is Christ. Works, labour, and patience, constitute it. Continuance in well-doing is the only proof that we are in salvation. We show our faith by our works.

The doctrines of grace are thus demonstrated to be

those of godliness: and they who view them in their coherence, will manifest in their example how united is their hold and how reciprocal is their efficiency. They will know how to be passive, and how to be zealous: when to quiet, and when to arouse, themselves. Their dependence will not torpefy their activity nor their activity elate their dependence.

This medium, so true to the Wisdom and Prudence of the Christian system, is maintained,—

By inspiring the most elevated joy in connection with the deepest self-abhorrence.

If there be a sentiment of mind most noteable in the first Christians it was their happiness. It tranfused itself through all their tempers and their engagements. They found it where it was least likely to be found. They counted it all joy to fall into divers afflictions. They rejoiced in tribulation. They took pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, for Christ's sake. Look into their inmost breast. There was joy in the Holy Ghost. They were glad with exceeding joy. Their joy was full. They rejoiced with joy unspeakable. Now all this is attainable by us. The fruit of the Spirit is joy. There is the joy of faith. Do we not sit with Christ in heavenly places? Have we not come to the heavenly Jerusalem? These are gratulations and hopes which fall little short of ecstacy. But lest we should be exalted above measure, there is ever present to us our fallen nature, our long unconversion, our indwelling corruption, our strange perverseness, our slow proficiency; our ungrateful, deceitful, unbelieving heart. God has forgiven, but we cannot forgive ourselves. We will go softly all our years in the bitterness of our soul. We remember our ways and are ashamed. We are confounded and will not open our mouth when He is pacified toward us. It is not fear. It is not abject sorrow. It is the struggle of alternate dispositions. The heart,

which breaks with grief, overflows with delight. "As sorrowful yet alway rejoicing." Neither in the joy nor in the sadness do we lose ourselves. Both are intelligent and subdued. The one cannot soar without a recollection which stays its flight: the other cannot droop without a hope to cheer its depression. The two combined terminate in a settled calm and a perfect peace. The rapture may have passed away, but so has the disconsolateness. It is as if the rainbow arched round the Eternal throne,—that meteor of expiring tempest and breaking sunshine,—had now contracted itself around our soul, filling it with all the mournful and the bright associations of fear and hope, while it illuminates us with its beauty and enfolds us in its embrace.

That mean of feeling, which is equidistant from extremes, is preserved,—

By displaying the different conduct pursued by the Deity towards sin and the sinner.

With that necessity which is our best conception, however it be unworthy, of infinite perfection, the God of holiness has ever opposed himself to moral evil in its divers forms. It is the abominable thing which he hates. It is what he would not have exist. He resents and counterworks it. He cannot overlook it, nor pass it by. No sin was ever forgotten, or is unmarked for punishment. The death of Christ, in its respect of an atonement, is the act of divine exculpation: it is designed to clear God from every misconstruction to which his long-suffering might be abused, to certify the exclusive basis on which his exercise of pardon can be rested, and to express, in circumstances and by means which could never be combined again, his eternal displeasure against all unrighteousness. By that authority and wisdom which belong to him, he has contrived and ordained a way by which sin, in its consequences of guilt, may be detached from the evil doer,—a method of abstraction and separa-

tion,—leaving the sinner, when he believes, free from those consequences, but not at all as a creature who has not sinned. Having sin, he is defiled by his sin. Though pardoned, he sees that there is a horrible perpetuity in the act. He thinks of an entail which defies calculation. His Lord and Saviour has died for him. He dwells upon the pangs, the indignities, the horrors, of the cross. He blesses the substitution. He looks on Him whom he has pierced. That Sufferer bears his sins and carries his sorrows. What tribulation and wrath and anguish are heaped upon that holy head! He dies for sin! He dies for sinners! What a mystery is contained in the double bearings of that deed! To condemn sin in the flesh, and to deliver them who sinned it! To make sin exceeding sinful and to rescue them who were sinners before the Lord exceedingly! To act the foe of sin and the friend of sinners! Oh the divine effect of these contemplations on the soul! "Blessed," it cries, "is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity." I might have been reserved unto judgment to be punished. It was the meet recompense. Mine iniquity is taken from me. Far as the east is from the west He hath removed my transgressions. I can the better understand its enormity now that I behold it transferred to yonder bloody tree. Strange that He spared not his own Son! But he was made sin! Justice bound him to the death! My sin is there. My guilt is upon him. Hateful, my sin, dost thou appear as thou wast never seen before! Thou art placed thus high, thou art made thus prominent, to scare my eye, to break my heart. Die there, thou that art my bitterness and shame. I hate thee with a perfect hatred! Let me die to thee! Blessed cross! I would know the fellowship of thy sufferings, being made comformable unto thy death!

Can the saved sinner,—after such a spectacle, with the dread remembrance how his sin was taken from him, and

dealt with according to its full measure of demerit and liability,—sin that grace may abound, or turn grace into lasciviousness! His judgments and his sympathies are converted against it, and the contrast between the treatment of the sin and the sinner must secure a new barrier between the sinner and the sin!

This congruity of conflicting sentiments is upheld,—

By combining the genuine humility of the gospel with our dignity as creatures and our conscientiousness as saints.

The holiest beings, in the view of their essential dependence and obligation, are filled with the most lowly sensibility. They cast down their crowns. They veil their faces. They see that the Infinite must be infinitely distant from them. They see that Necessary Excellence can bear no comparison with that which is derived and imitative. But no sin prostrates their brow. No confusion clouds their face. They are true to their high estate. They have not left their first habitation. They cannot repent. Nor do they depreciate their sphere and rank of existence. They decry not their thrones and their dominions. Their deepest humility answers to strictest truth. They confess only what they are, and adore their Creator. But the humility of the Christian is of another complexion. He knows himself the guilty and the depraved creature. He is vile. He cannot look up. He repents in dust and in ashes. He cannot forget what he has been. Still imperfect, he bewails what he is. For ever there will be on his spirit the memory of past guilt and woe. His new song is a song of deliverance. But his sinfulness is not to be avenged upon the inferiority of his nature. That is worthy of high honour. There is nothing why man should not respect himself. The gospel teaches him this lofty mood. Sin is his only degradation. His capabilities are now laid open. The powers of his mind are braced to healthy action. His immortality yearns within

him. He awakes to his destiny. He is renewed after the image of Him who created him. He cannot adequately perceive the deforming influence of sin, without placing before him the greatness it has ruined. The voluntary humility, the reptile abjectness, to which many stoop, is at utter variance with taste, with fact, with Christianity. Nor in our averments of Christian motive need we, ought we, to addict ourselves to this gratuitous disparagement. If we please God, if our conscience sends back its answer void of offence toward God and man, if we have our conversation honest, there must be falsehood in the contrary charge. Jealous, as it becomes us, of our motives,—knowing that, when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants,—still humility requires no sacrifice of truth. A heart right with God has a title to be seen and heard and felt in the clear countenance, the steadfast eye, the unembarrassed tone, of a manly independence. We may have even whereof to glory, but not before God. There must be praise where there is virtue. But without the consciousness of self-respect neither can exist.

These remarks may be salutary in two ways; they may tend to correct the prejudice of many persons who look upon the humility of the gospel as a grovelling debasement of mind: they may excite the true Christian, clothed as he is with humility, to a fearless magnanimity, to the port and bearing of him whom integrity and uprightness preserve.

This mellowed habit of mind is supported,—

By causing all supernatural influence to operate through our rational powers and by intelligent means.

The principle of life is subtle and unscanned. But, after its kind, it is always developed in the same succession of fixed, classified, manifestations. The intellectual, the highest, life, follows the same law. It is known by its respective conditions. It is always and in every

place, without forgetting the degrees of its expansion, the same. Having found one such creature, you have a general knowledge of all. But it is a very primary doctrine of revelation, that the work of a sinner's salvation involves the necessity that he be enlightened and purified by a power from on high. Now it might be asked, How is this influence to be ascertained? How far does it coincide with our mental constitution? By what fruits shall it be determined? Does not the opinion throw open the flood-gate of fanaticism? The answer is, "Now we have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit which is of God, that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God." This is the simple design, and this Spirit can alone be recognised by such perception of these revealed things. "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." These are the true marks, and the existence of this Spirit can alone be assured by such effects. "God worketh within us to will and to do." He inclines our nature agreeably to its own rule of motives. No violence is done: there is choice and action. Even in extraordinary illapses, "the spirit of the prophets was subject to the prophets:" there was no over-mastering impulse. Whenever the Spirit now moves in us, there is the understanding also. This wonderful, this unspeakable, gift of the Holy Ghost is imparted to us, to carry out our proper nature, to lead us forward in our original direction, to make our reason more rational, our judgment more judicious, our volition more voluntary; to allow to each power its right and to each feeling its freedom. The written word is at once the standard by which each influence must be tried, and is the instrument by which a divine influence alone can operate.

It is seen, then, that the highest inspiration cannot destroy any faculty of the mind, being but its highest exercise; and that there is no denaturalising tendency,

since the mind's appropriate qualities are the only subjects and mediums of this divine impression. It enlarges *our heart.* It is the spirit of quick *understanding.* It is the law of the *Spirit of life.* All is pre-eminently a plastic power working on the fixed and regular substance of the soul, and exhibiting none other substance, however it be refined of alloy and wrought into a workmanship of beauty.

The Wisdom and Prudence of the Gospel discover themselves in this respect,—

By resting our evidence of safety and spiritual welfare upon personal virtues.

We must often ask ourselves whether we be in the Lord? We see no reason to deny the direct testimony of the Comforter to our acceptance. As he has brought home to us the conviction of our sins, why may he not assure us consciously of our forgiveness? Does he not witness to our adoption and with our spirit? Is not this to receive the word with joy of the Holy Ghost? But still the inferential argument is indispensable. The spirit must attest something. That which he confirms must be already true. We cannot be called to believe that as true of ourselves which is not true at the moment of belief. No faith can make the falsehood, veracity; or the nonentity, fact. If the Holy Spirit testifies to our adoption, we are adopted. "*Because ye are sons* God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying Abba, Father." No direct witness can avail in the absence of holiness: the inferential argument simply respects such holiness. Then must we look, on both suppositions, to character and conduct. We may be compelled to say concerning the boaster of this assured acceptance, "How dwelleth the love of God in him?" "What doth it profit, though a man say that he hath faith and have not works? Can faith save him?" Take it any way, this must be the criterion. Only as we add to our faith virtue through

every couplet of successive, and rising, graces, only so shall an entrance be ministered unto us abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The last judgment sets up the same evidence. "They were judged every man according to their works."

Such is the wholesome symmetry of practical piety : no proof of acceptance, no assurance of hope, no "yea,"—though we had not doubted that "the Spirit said it,"—is of any validity without it.

Moreover to save the mind from those violent alternations to which it tends, the religion of Christ asserts its Wisdom and Prudence,—

By supplying the absence of enslaving fear with salutary caution.

We know that there is a fear which hath torment, a spirit of bondage. There is a timidity of consequences. This is cast out. Who is he that condemneth? Who can be against us? We trust and are not afraid. We can think of the future, and our faith protects us from dismay and depression. Our enemy doth not triumph over us. Though a host should encamp against us, in this will we be confident. We feel that there is a boast which we may make in God. "He is able to keep us from falling. He will keep us from every evil work and preserve us unto his heavenly kingdom. He keepeth the feet of his saints. Christ is surety for us. He will bring forth judgment unto victory. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? He will confirm us unto the end. The Spirit sealeth us unto the day of redemption. Our confidence of final salvation is cheerful and unfaltering. We are persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." All this assurance respects the covenanted purpose and de-

clared faithfulness of God. But is there nothing to abate this confidence of boasting? Every thing that looks at the fickleness of ourselves!—"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." "Be not high-minded, but fear." "I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." "Pass the time of your sojourning here in fear." In this respect we cannot be too diffident. Our use of means cannot be too assiduous. If we are invincible, who maketh us more than conquerors? Was it ever known that soldiers, who were called invincible, stood the less firmly and fought the less bravely, because their banners bore that emblazoned style? Did the ancient warriors contend the less manfully because they went into the battle with their brows filleted by victorious wreaths? The more wary was their movement, the more sensitive was their honour, the more impetuous their attack,—their burst as the billow, their resistance as the rock.

THE ACTUAL EXISTENCE OF OUR DEPRAVED NATURE, AND THE WORK OF SANCTIFICATION IN US PRESSING FORWARD TO ITS MATURITY, TEND TO THAT REGULATED TEMPERAMENT OF MIND WHICH WE URGE.

Sin will be, so long as we live, a capable thing in us: it is natural, and therefore easy and ready. It is bound up with our strongest propensions. It has a deep-seated hold in our corporeal, sentient, nature. It acts in all manner of concupiscence. It dwells in us. But there is a new and stronger power. We call it religion or grace. Sin exists and struggles: but this predominates and reigns. Paul describes the conflict. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." He lays open his own breast. "I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me." He contrasts his former and

his present state. "I *was* alive without the law once." "I *see* another law in my members warring against the law of my mind. O wretched man that I *am*." The tenses mark the different times. Yet he "delights in the law of God after the inward man." Hence the contest. There are two rival principles. Yet they are not equal. That of corruption is doubtless a voluntary power, not blind nor unintelligent. But that of grace is the transcendent, and determines the superior will. Of the former the Christian may make disclaimer: it is not his cherished purpose, his true bent, and, though guilty and accountable on account of it, he may still exclaim: "It is no more I that do it." His sincere, his highest, egoism cannot be in it. He seeks not exculpation. He simply declares that he cannot reach his aim, that he "cannot do the things which he would," that the renewed nature is checked and vexed by the fallen nature, that the Christian's Self would soar away far from all these adjuncts and provocatives of sin. Behold, then, the position of this contest. The believer is sanctified, wholly as to diffusion, but not as to degree: sin abides in him. And in proportion as his sactification procceds, his sin is often rendered more obvious and active. He is perplexed in this discovery. It seems the delay, and not the advancement of his holiness. He appears less renewed than he was before. Thus, notwithstanding, his true sanctity is promoted. It is the province of light to reveal any thing rather than itself. The depravity is not really increased. To have penetrated it is the sure method of victory over it. And now we observe that state of mind which sweetly blends extremes. How humble is the Christian kept by all the hostilities which ever beset and threaten him! How anxious is his suspense! How sleepless must be his vigilance! He is always in the presence of his enemies! It is domestic treason against which he guards! Still does he trace a spiritual volition

breaking through every resistance, acquiring strength, dispersing opposition, pledging triumph! He cannot boast: he must not despond. You hear him in his lament: "The evil which I would not, that I do!" You hear him in his anthem: "I thank God, through Jesus Christ our Lord!" The "depth" and the "height" of these emotions preserve him steady in his course, and help him in "his patience to possess his soul!"

AND CERTAIN VIEWS OF PERSONAL CONDUCT ARE SO COUPLED, IN THE GOSPEL, WITH THE NOBLEST VIEWS OF GRACE, THAT ANY IMPROPER WARPING OF OUR MINDS IS COUNTERACTED.

The works of believers are rewardable. God accepteth them and is pleased with them. He is glorified in themselves. Promise of a return or recompense is made to their acts, partly growing out of the quality of those acts, but chiefly as actual additions of happiness. He is not unrighteous to forget the work of faith and the labour of love. He covenants with us. We, knowing his word and trusting his assurance, may always have respect unto this recompense of reward. But do we boast? Is it not a constitution of grace which alone could render our deeds praiseworthy and remunerable? which can speak to us, Well done? Is it not a new, independent, and most merciful, consideration and treatment of our moral agency? It is the work of God by which we exclusively can work the works of God.

And there are errors which gain entrance and power among us by the forms of truth under which they pass. Popular aphorisms are heard, the more mischievous in that they are not wholly false. Should it be affirmed that, "there is nothing good in us,"—it is true of our fallen nature "that is, in our flesh,"—but Regeneration produces "a good thing which we must keep." Should it be alleged that, "all which is good in us consists in Divine influence,"—it is true, inasmuch as it is the source of all

which determines "the new creature,"—but true religion takes the shape of personal principles and habits, and enters the system of the voluntary, responsible soul. Should it be asserted that, "there is no meritoriousness in actions,"—it is true that those of the sinful creature cannot contain it, he is dead in sins and his entire life is tainted with the moral disqualification: and though the recovered sinner should obey perfectly, nothing can be of desert in that obedience: but actions cannot be indifferent, they are displacent or attractive, good or evil. There is that "which is acceptable before God." Should it be broached that, "we must seek for all comfort beyond or without ourselves."—it is true that nothing strictly original in us can justifiably or intelligently yield us any solace in our relationship to God,—but the evidence of his operation on our hearts is most consolatory, and this must be sought in our own consciousness of what we are and of what we have proved. Should it be recorded that, "we must come to Christ at our last hour as at our first awakening we fled to him,"—it is true that we have no more individual right of access to him at one time than another: but ought we not to approach with deeper contrition and stronger faith! ought we not to draw nearer in the spirit of adoption? ought we not the more closely to resemble him whom we have so repeatedly implored? ought our pleadings to have acquired no more scriptural clearness, no more confidence, no more child-like trust? Are we only sinners as we were then? Are we not children? Are we not the redeemed? Surely there is much difference between the sinner's first concern and outcry, and the saint's last victory and song! And yet, the growth in grace which this shall exhibit, will in nothing be so wonderful as in the humility made perfect!

WHILE THE DISTINCTIVE BLESSINGS AND HONOURS OF THE CHRISTIAN MIGHT TEND TO ELATE HIM, HE IS AFFECTED BY THE MOST OPPOSITE MOTIVES.

Scripture does most vividly describe, and most urgently note, the changes wrought by a Divine Sovereignty on the subjects of its grace. They are made to differ. They know their election of God. They have been called out of darkness into marvellous light. They have been chosen from the beginning to salvation. They can appropriate that series of wonders : " Whom he did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called : and whom he called, them he also justified : and whom he justified, them he also glorified." May not this induce dispositions contemptuous toward others? May it not indite a censorious style of language ? May it not inspire an overweening self-importance ? The people of God ! The sons of God ! Kings and priests unto God ! This can only awaken the more ardent gratitude and more profound humility. The cause of choice is not in themselves. If intimation is ever given of the cause, it is the greater sinfulness of the object. It is some design to illustrate the freeness and power of grace in restoring the most wretched outcast. And who is this restored one, that he should glory in himself ? He is the undeserving subject of all. He is a brand plucked out of the fire. He is the chief of sinners. This is his utmost praise and claim : "Howbeit I obtained mercy." He owes, he must still owe, he must owe for ever ! He has paid nothing, he can pay nothing, he can pay nothing to eternity ! He is bowed down by the weight of obligations and the load of benefits; when he contrasts himself with those less favoured it is only to feel that he is no better than they, though so differently treated, regarded, and blessed. The ascription of salvation must be perpetually upon his lip : thanksgiving must be the voice of his endless melody.

God abounds in this Wisdom and Prudence towards us, and thus " unites our hearts,"—

By most strongly abstracting us from the things of earth, and yet giving us the deepest interest in its relations and engagements.

The world is placed before us as a vanity, an immense evil, a ruthless foe. The pride of life is put to scorn. But life itself is a solemn gift and trust. Household and species prefer their claim upon us. We are debtors to all. We must do good unto all. We must love and honour all men. Whatever concerns the history and condition and destiny of our fellow-creatures is our nearest interest. Our present existence is the only opportunity for seeking their salvation. Death is not only a change most serious in itself, it is serious as the termination of that opportunity: "I shall behold man no more with the inhabitants of the world." We yield to no indifference. We discriminate. We mark the points of littleness: we seize the points of grandeur. We lose our life: we gain it: we keep it. Even now our heaven begins, not only in its earnest but in its rudiment: there now worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

Such is the explanation, and such the harmony, which we would suggest of certain apparent discordances. We have referred to the system of checks in the natural universe as an analogy. And that analogy may help us still. For really attraction is the only law. Every repulsion being only a reference to another centre, it is plain that it is but another attraction. Now all differing centres are arranged in subserviency to that which is innermost of all. The natural universe is, then, one harmonious whole, and every momentary antagonism but conduces to the perfection of its harmony. There is some mighty pivot, some glorious axle, on which the whole revolves. So all the truths of salvation are not only parts of one system, but their effects upon the believing mind are common and interchangeable: and the Author of that salvation, looking upon these truths and these effects sweetly linked toge-

ther, beholds in them "the things which are equal." There is spontaneous corrective and self-adjustment, all is in its level, and on the glory of the entire scheme there is this defence.

The proportion of faith is that to which we should direct our aim. There are no discrepancies in Scripture. No confusion should distort our principles. The truths of revelation, though sometimes they seem to stand apart, are all bound together, like mountain-heights swelling from the same base and commingled in the same heaven. Nor should we suffer a chaos of half-apprehended truths in our minds. As one of the chief pleasures of science consists in the perception of affinities and agreements, associating the detached and combining the remote,—so, Christian knowledge, next to its power in saving the soul, yields no purer joy than the comprehensive study of all revealed facts and principles, displaying their order, defining their province, and commanding their use. They are all coincident, cognate: they throw on each a mutual light and they stand to each in a reciprocal subserviency. They are the different members of the same body: they are the varying proportions of the same building. Nothing is without its function: nothing without its place. There is no extraneous, no irreconcileable, no confusing, element in Christianity. It is of one: it is one. And if we be Christians, our experience will be the counterpart of it. As it works out from apparent shocks and collisions its perfect unity, so shall our experience be wrought in the same way. "In obeying from our heart its form," whatever of its influences may seem to interfere with each other, they all will be found to "establish our heart:" as the opposing currents often swell the tide, and more proudly waft the noble bark it carries; as the counterbalancing forces of the firmament bear the star onward in its unquivering poise and undeviating revolution!

SERMON IX.

MORAL INABILITY.

John vi. 44, 65.

No Man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him. . . . . Therefore said I unto you, that no Man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.

Next to the origin of moral evil,—the rise and outbreak of sin in the universe,—there is no fact so inscrutable as the condition in which human beings are born into this world. However we define ideas, however we explain terms, however we embrace theories, our entrance on this life, the initiative of our existence, is imperfect and disadvantageous. Such a statement falls very far short of the fearful fact. It is a most flattering view of our case. But we begin with this sparing representation. We can readily conceive a better lot than ours. Let us emerge into a sphere in which virtue predominates, or where rather it is only known. Let our infant forms be enfolded in undefiled hands. Let no tendency move in us but toward rectitude and happiness. Such an ordination does not await us. The consequences of sin threaten our earliest life. But this is not the darkest feature of the dilemma. It might be something incidental, or inevitable, in a general system of governing mankind. The evil has struck deeper. Sin itself inheres in our nature. We are shapen in iniquity. We are altogether born in sins. It is not an arrear of

punishment. It is not an inheritance of retribution. These entails may operate. Yet they denote not that of which we speak. It is a depravity connatural and innate. It is spontaneous inclination to transgress. There is no exception. It is a universal law. Other descent may vary. A different habit of body and state of life may be transmitted. Some receive the seeds of health, others of disease. Some come forth to abundance, others to destitution. Some accede to a name of honour, others to a name of scorn. In these differences there is no little moral difficulty. But here is a process of degeneracy,—not more, not less,—depending upon no accident, subject to no anomoly, capable of no remission. This is true of all who have ever existed: it may be pronounced of all who shall ever live: "The children not being yet born, neither having done any good or evil."

We are quite aware that much is advanced against these opinions. It is denied that there is any federal connection between Adam and his posterity. It is denied that there can be any imputation of his failure to his descendants. A whole array of disclaimers and protestations is set up against the supposition. An appeal is made to every attribute of justice, to every ground of reason. Our reply is simple: these enquiries respect not the present matter. Is a sinful nature or disposition common to us all? We leave questions of guilt, responsibility, penal infliction: we postpone considerations, how far we can be involved in another's act. We speak of no covenant of works. We rest on no experimental treatment of our nature. Does every man find in himself a sinful bias?

This we call a great and fearful difficulty. We do not wish to evade or slight it. We believe it to be a prominent, fundamental, Bible truth. We cannot fail to mark its reiterated and assured announcemeut in that inspired page. It is taken for granted when it is not affirmed.

Scripture is based upon its assumption. Revelation has no meaning, proposes no design, if it be not the fact.

Nor are we now purposing to defend such doctrine. If men will reply that there is no source of depravity in the heart, that it is only external infection, that whatever of moral corruption we descry is the fruit of pernicious example,—our maintenance is this: that the hypothesis does not account for the perpetuity of sin in the world if it be but incident to any individual or generation of men, —and that it does not offer any explanation why every individual and every generation should be seen proceeding in the same character and addicted to the same courses. "They have all gone out of the way: they are together become unprofitable: there is none that doeth good, no not one." "All we like sheep have gone astray: we have turned every one to his own way." "All flesh has corrupted his way upon the earth." "This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings."

Shut the Bible. Do you clear the difficulty? You have still to deal with facts. They are the same whether it be received or discarded. They press upon us the same as if it were unknown. Infancy and youth exhibit no less aversion to piety and duty. There is no amended heart. There is no abated irreligion. The fountain of evil still overflows, and still feeds the desolating torrent.

It is not that we wish to shrink from what is esteemed an invidious and polemical nomenclature. We shall not now quarrel with them who speak of the whole race having sinned in its parent. We shall not deny the application of the language, which speaks of all as "children of wrath," to those who are actually children, and who "have not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." We shall not refuse the interpretation which is most literal of such texts as these: "For that all have sinned:" "Through the offence of one the many are dead:" "By the offence of one judgment came upon all

to condemnation:" "By one man's disobedience the many were made sinners." Our statement, which is more limited, is all that we now impress: man naturally, that is, according to his *present* nature, inclines invariably to the sinful in character and action. We may affirm the fact in scriptural language: "Every imagination of the thoughts of the heart are only evil continually."

Now in the case of a Pestilence, committing its waste and havoc around us, we might not be wholly incurious as to the causes out of which it sprung. We might speculate upon the strange and portentous epidemic. Yet while it raged, and while our duty called us from lazaretto to lazaretto, from pallet to pallet, we should not, we could not, think of aught but of its form and cure. Any theory we must defer to future investigation. Our language must be, The Plague is at its height, it widens its malignant fury, it maws down its countless victims! Let us warn, let us save! Let us go forth with all the means of remedy, with all the powers of healing! If futurity can bring us leisure for after-thought, we will bethink us to study how the Calamity arose.

The predicament of man is very parallel. As the prognosis of bodily disease is variously described, so is moral disease as variously reported. But both diseases may fester on while it is the question of controversy. We speak of the spiritual virus. It has penetrated the system. We have not time to discuss, we may not possess premisses to decide, the manner of its introduction. There it is! "From within, out of the heart of man, proceed the evil things which defile a man."

Mark, then, the position of every human creature. He enters the world with this propension. No matter how it has descended, whence it has befallen, by what circumcumstance it operates,—with this intentness every man is found. He is seen a transgressor from the womb, at every time, and in every place. Not one has of himself, through

any inclination simply his own, risen above this level. No mechanical law of general and outward nature has ever been fulfilled more certainly and constantly.

Three affirmations may be specified for the purpose of expounding the true state of man; this evil tendency—now only considered as a fact,—being allowed.

—Man is a *voluntary agent.* Material subsistence is unconscious; it would be foolish to speak of it as free. That portion of intellect which belongs to the inferior animals, which we may call instinct to distinguish its restriction, but which we cannot hope by so loose a term in any wise to explain, shows its want of liberty. There is no advancement, no variation, no originality, in them. They never abandon the past. They never improve on experience. The habitude of one is that of all. They innovate neither upon food nor habitation. But man's nature is hardly a chain round about him. You cannot, except as to ultimate conditions, know in what course man shall be discovered. You cannot divine his counsels and ends. He has a thousand points of election. We cannot compute his range. Here is his manifold volition. He laughs at the caviller who questions his power of choice. He is conscious of it. He does what he pleases. He turns whithersoever he will. He is proud of it. It is his boast. He often resolves to demonstrate it against better reason. It is his proper independence, from which he will not be diverted, and of which he will not be robbed.

—Man is a *responsible agent.* It cannot be left to him how he shall use his freedom, without certain laws being appointed for his guidance and without proper enforcement of those laws. The remark is unmeaning, that he might be committed to particular consequences in order to regulate or check his conduct. But such consequences, if not laws in themselves, presuppose and indicate them: in the strictest sense they are the sanctions of those laws.

The recompense that is meet stands out on every side. Man is not with impunity thrown upon his course. Good and evil, life and death, are set before him to choose. It is no vain thing which is at stake. Whether this rule be carried on by a more distinct revelation, or by those recognised consequences, the principle is the same : every man must give an account of himself to God, and every man is now in a state of accountableness.

—Man, being *voluntary* and *responsible*, is *inexcusable* in the business of his invariably sinful inclination. He freely, determinately, pursues it. It is exactly according to what he prefers. This might be shown by an easy illustration. A criminal is arraigned. The breach of the law is proved against him. He does not deny the charge. In his defence, when he pleads for the arrest or mitigation of punishment, let him frankly avow it. Let him draw from the offence the very reason why he should be discharged. Let him protest that he ought to be forgiven, because it was his will to perpetrate the crime. Let him reiterate that he always hated the law which he has transgressed. Let him assure his judge that it was always his bent to do what he has done. Let him call the tribunal to witness that he never knew nor cherished any other disposition than that which has led him to this course of guilt. And,—could we suppose such a line of defence,—what would be its effect? That the will, that the exclusive will, to violate the statute, was an excuse? No, but that it showed the prepense character, that it constituted the unspeakable aggravation, of the deed. Pity would be lost in execration. Out of his own mouth would he be condemned. But this is precisely the actuating principle of every sinner. "He chooses his own ways and delights in his own abominations." His sin is his desire. Is this an apology? He only blinds himself and his reason when he says that he desires another will, that his will opposes what he seeks. He can only decide according to

the stronger motive, or according to the preference,—that which he thinks best for him at the time. He cannot be sorry for his will. He cannot be conscious that his will thwarts him. He is in the flesh. He walks after the flesh. He minds earthly things. What a testimony does the sinner heap up against himself who reasons in his heart that his punishment must be unjust inasmuch as every purpose of that heart flowed in one sinful direction! We may inherit much to which we are disinclined: we may inherit much of which we may be tempted to complain: but to repine that we inherit our will, our choice, our preference, what we would, is insanely foolish and passing strange!

And there is another objection which, for a moment, we would consider. Every reasonable creature, such as man or angel, must be by nature defectible. He has received a law, and that presumes a possible departure from it. He is endowed with a power of choice, and this implies the susceptibility of refusal. Could God constitute such a creature necessarily obedient? a creature who could never fall? To say nothing of an independence implied in this question and which rests only upon a finite nature, where is his liberty? It may be asked, Is not God able to make him stand? Assuredly: but then this is aid extrinsic to his nature, that which his creation and his probation did not contemplate: it is a favour or grace. This may be given. Angels have received it. Trial may have past, and the reward be in such security. But both classes of these agents were put to the test: in the one instance it was general, and some stood and some failed; in the other it was representative, and all were seminally, if not federally, involved in the result. On the part of Adam's posterity this was "not willingly," so far as that they were not consulted. It was a Divine constitution. But it is willingly, since every one of that posterity by

wilful sin incessantly supports and justifies the first transgression.

Extended as are these observations, we trust that they will not be found useless and irrelevant to those discussions which the Text demands. It speaks of an inability to perform that which is still duty, and which is still necessary to salvation. We find that there is a very ordinary mode, in Sacred Writ, of describing a particular condition of the sinner's mind. Our Lord thus fully accords to it and sanctions it by his authority. The fallen creature, man, "*cannot* come to Him," unless there be a Divine succour. This is the subject of which we treat. It is placed before us in an announcement or proposition, which, at the same time that it requires our belief, appeals as fully to our understanding. It is little more than a fact of individual consciousness; and only the pride of sin hides it from us.

Let us consider,

I. THE TERMS IN WHICH THIS TRUTH IS MADE KNOWN TO US.

No man. In the strongest manner all exception to the statement is debarred. "Adam begat a son in his own image, after his likeness." "Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one." Let the man be however privileged and trained, let the composition of his humanity be however sweet and lovely, let his manners be however graceful and his tempers however amiable, he shares in the ruin of moral strength which was the earliest effect of our fall. Our first parents fled. They returned not to their Maker. They sought not his grace. They "could not" come. Of all their descendants not an individual has yielded of himself. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh." They who do yield and return are "born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

To "*come*," denotes religious exercise. "O Thou that hearest prayer, to thee shall all flesh come," that is, shall pray. "He that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst;" coming and believing are, then, convertible words. Christ is the exclusive Saviour: "even to Him shall men come." It is only as we come to him that we can have "the fellowship of Christ Jesus." This secures all the blessings of his mediation.

But it is added that "no man *can* come." This not being a bodily act but that which is spiritual, the incapacity must be equally spiritual. It cannot be original defect, nor is it defect of the present mental system. The human mind is the same in substance, the same in that which constitutes it, that it ever was. What can be the incapacity of the mind, being the same, to do in one state what it has done in another state? It must be simply a restraint or unfitness produced by particular views and dispositions. Any illustration must be impertinent which is derived from muscular or mechanical resistance. The inability must be moral. The man is held back by contrary motives and inclinations. The soul under their influence cannot come: for it cannot will against itself. The idea of incapacity or inability is most just; it is spoken of intellectual essence: and what can be more certain than that mind cannot proceed in a way opposed to all its volitions?

But it may be "*drawn*." The indisposition, which is its only impotency, may be removed, and replaced by disposition which will be its only strength. To "draw" mind, is to induce it. This can only be done by appeals and persuasions of a mental order. "I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love," with, whatever motives are most congenial and most interesting. "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me," by the attractions of the cross. No new

faculty is now supplied, any more than its extinction could be formally supposed. But man is turned to God! Such a direction is given to him that he is a new creature, and partakes of a divine nature. Violence is not done to him. His regeneration is a rational and moral process. "God worketh in us to *will* and to *do*:" his grace determines it, but it is *our* will and *our* doing. When He draws, we run after him. We run the way of His commandments, when he has enlarged our hearts.

If there be this interposed power to "draw" us, it is "given." Faith is, therefore, said to be "of the operation of God." He "fulfils the work of faith with power." It is given to us on the behalf of Christ to believe on his name." We "believe through grace." "It is the gift of God." The Father is exhibited as thus "drawing" them who come to Christ, and as "giving" spiritual power that they may come. He is the God of sovereignty. "Blessed art thou," said Jesus to his believing disciple: "for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father who is in heaven."

All these terms suppose the moral liberty of man. Of his spiritual freedom, which can only be recovered to him by the Redemption which is in Christ Jesus, we do not at present speak. He acts from choice. Without motive he could not be in a condition of liberty: instead of fettering his liberty, it is essential to its idea and exercise. Man, if he "come not to Christ," is free; he "cannot come," because all his freedom is abused not to come: if he "come," because he is "drawn" and because it is given him, he is free, his "heart is set" upon it, his whole soul is turned to it, all his freedom is determined in this direction.

We may now examine,

II. The evidence on which the statement rests.

When we remember Who it is that speaks, that he "searcheth the reins and hearts," that he "speaketh the

words of God," we must adjudge the testimony to be conclusive. We must "tremble at His word."

But the total doctrine of Divine Revelation proceeds on this impracticability. Is man described in his destitution of all means to uplift himself and restore him to the sphere whence he has fallen? "When we were yet *without strength*, Christ died for the ungodly." "O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself: but in me is thy help." Is man described in his deprivation of all desire to be restored? "You hath He quickened who were *dead* in trespasses and sins." This is insensibility to the good, but it is not inaction: "Ye *walked* according to the course of this world." It is not listlessness: "Fulfilling the *desires* of the flesh and of the mind."

Let us endeavour to place the facts involved in this Proposition, before us.

*Man is in a state of spiritual estrangement.** God knoweth him afar off. "He is angry with the wicked every day." "Your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you." We have, in this state, no "access." Look rather into the mind of man than into his relationship, now disrupted and hostile, with the Deity. "God is not in all his thoughts." "There is none that seeketh after God." "Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart." Can a creature, thus "without God in the world," of his own free will turn, not only from his habit, but from his

* It is very desirable that the terms *moral* and *spiritual* should not be interchanged. Moral always respects a government and an accountability. Moral evil is that which is done against law and from a responsible motive in the agent. To know when it may be used, we have only to ask, Has it any connection with law or responsibility? Spiritual, applies to our higher nature, and to whatever affects it: spiritual blindness, enslavement, &c. We may speak of *moral* inability: it is that inability for which we are accountable,—but it is of a spiritual nature.

nature, from himself! May he resist every motive which he can appreciate, and follow every motive which he must abhor? The epithets of a physical kind are frequently used. We are represented as blind and dead. We know that these can only be applied as the things themselves differ. The eyes of our understanding are not quenched, but sealed in night. Spiritual death consists with the life of sense and mind. The analogy can only be traced in the points which are common. But this suffices to dash the hope of man that he can unseal the eyes of his understanding, or make alive his own soul. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves, to think any thing as of ourselves."

Men do not come to Christ of their own self-prompted accord. There is not a motive, intelligent and merciful, but is proposed to us. "Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord." There is rebuke, remonstrance, entreaty. "The Lord hath spoken." He sends his messengers and employs his instruments. "As though God did beseech you by us." "We persuade men." We "warn every man and teach every man." There is no method of instruction, no art of urgency, but is plied. "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it?" "Who hath believed our report?" We see a common and invariable course. Men do not believe and repent. The multitude does evil. They love death more than life. They are the world. They abide in death. "They walk in a way that is not good, *after their own thoughts*." The Christian minister knows that so far as they are concerned, this can only be the result. He knows the adaptation of his means and the responsibility of his hearers, but from moral suasion he knows success cannot arise. In his duty he preaches: and he has well-grounded hope. He shall not beat the air. But did he prophesy to the dry bones only, he would fold his hands in despair. His encouragement is not in

the pliancy, the seriousness, the attention, of men. He can find nothing to cheer him in their most favourable state. The wicked forsakes not his way, nor the unrighteous man his thoughts. He sees not the hopeful, and favourable, state of mind. If there be a people "made ready," it is "a people prepared of the Lord."

But they who come to Christ agree in their account of the moving cause. They tell of their "former conversation" and of their "former lusts in their ignorance." They speak of their insensibility. They declare that they sought not to God of themselves. Often ask they: "Who maketh thee to differ from another?" Their general opinions, even as affecting the origin of the religious principle, may seriously differ: but to the practical solution they spontaneously consent. The reference—"*Howbeit* I obtained mercy," is caught by one and all. It opens all hearts. It chords all tongues. Consistent or not consistent with given theory, this is the universal ascription. There is no dispute. One strong feeling precludes all possible variance. This is the point of rest, the centre of repose. If there be a song on earth like that of heaven, it is this symphony of praise. So in Scripture we often find the declaration of this truth. "I am sought of them that asked not for me: I am found of them that sought me not: I said, Behold me, behold me, unto a nation that was not called by my name." "So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." And when a semblance has been introduced of creatural power, when any turn of language has been employed which might suggest it, it is immediately checked. "But now, after that ye have known God, or *rather* are *known of God*." "I laboured, *yet not* I, but the grace of God which was with me." "I live, *yet not* I, but Christ liveth in me." "By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves." "We love him, because he first loved us."

And every other supposeable cause must be inefficient. For if a mixed operation be assigned, it must be divine influence and native effort which are engaged in it. It is a conjoint power. Now if this be supernatural influence exclusively acting on our nature, the controversy is surrendered, for we ask no more. If it be, however, intended that the grace only assists our own exertion, we must enquire at once, how that exertion was prompted? Is it of human tendency? If not, the statement that "no man can come" is not invalidated. If it be contested that our natural will controls the grace, then must it be greater than it, then must it be independent of it. Then, too, must our will be the hinge of our salvation. Then, also, may we glory in it as explaining the sole reason why we repent and believe.

Strange are the opinions which are widely held in regard to the Human Will. When we speak of it as a faculty, a distinct power of the mind, we obscure and perplex the proper idea we should form of it. The mind is one. It takes certain conditions. It knows what it loves. That is the object which it chooses. Some things may not affect it any way. Then it is seen without desire or dislike towards them. If any thing does affect what it feels to be its happiness, then it is moved. It is beheld in a particular state in respect of it. It wills, or it does not will. There is a proposition of truth,—it approves or does not approve it. There is a course of action,—it prefers or does not prefer it. This is simple fact. Every mind is conscious of it. A judgment is a volition, but so likewise is a passion. The only distinction is not in the nature of the choice, but in the objects embraced by it.

If these simplifications be allowed, how can the human will be more or less than the turn and course of depraved affections? "For there is no man that sinneth not?" Why should it be reserved from the general charge of our

vileness? By what show of reason can it be maintained that it has escaped the general defilement? It is not a column towering above the ruin, but itself a portion of that ruin. It is not an untainted part, but the limb most restless with disease. It is an utter inconsistency to speak of will apart from choice, and of choice apart from disposition. You love, what you love you select, and the will is but the manifestation of the strongest motive at the particular time and in the particular decision. Nothing can be more absurd than to speak of man exercising his will irrespectively of what he esteems and desires as his good.

Common or universal grace will not, then, account for the religious difference between men. If all have equal spiritual power given to them, that is supposed to make a proper use of it which is itself but the instrument of the utmost depravity. If the grace be unequal, then the more may be adequate, and the less, defective: but this leaves the position of the argument unchanged. And surely He who claims the entire glory must be the Author of the undivided work.

We advance another stage in these enquiries by establishing,

III. The principle on which this statement proceeds.

Dispositions and their corresponding conduct may be predicted, as well as what we call events. We can define the orbit of the planet and the ellipse of a comet: it is mathematical calculation. We can augur certain consequences of human freedom: this is moral science. Will not every one, with an equal motive, act in the same way?

Prophecy is the announcement beforehand of what shall be. It generally regards issues in which men have the largest share. "And who," saith God, "as I, shall call, and shall declare it, and set it in order for me? and the

things that are coming, and shall come, let them show unto them." How many volitions go to constitute such events,—events which are certain, but brought about by motives which are free!

But we find on a closer examination of Scripture that there is not only an abundance of general predictions, peremptorily deciding what shall be the determinations of national and individual will,—but of direct prophetic averments concerning the futurition of guilt and disobedience. Of him who is free the whole sequel is ascertained. Now this could not be ascertained, unless, the mind being known, the development of that mind is as certainly known. It is the freedom of disposition, but that disposition in its "inward part is very wickedness."

"And I am sure,"—this was the declaration of Jehovah to Moses, "that the king of the Egyptians will not let you go." "And Pharoah's heart was hardened, neither did he hearken unto them," "as the Lord had said;" and yet did he act of his ownself, for he did "not set his heart to this." "Jesus knew from the beginning who should betray him," and yet Judas "*sought opportunity* to betray him." The Lord appeared to Paul when entranced in the temple, and commanded him: "Make haste, and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem: for *they will not receive* thy testimony concerning me:" and yet they were strictly accountable, for it was "to fill up their sins alway."

In this manner it is again and again avouched to us how certain men will act, what will be their proceedings and provocations. This view differs from the former in that it does not fall under distinct prophecy. It is the knowledge of propensions which, if uncounteracted, will operate. It is the divine record and analysis of our nature: it is written by the authority of Him who "knew what was in man." "Ye will revolt more and more." "They proceed from evil to evil." "For the vile person will speak villainy, and his heart will work iniquity, to

practise hypocrisy, and to utter error against the Lord." "Let favour be showed to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness: in the land of uprightness will he deal unjustly, and will not behold the majesty of the Lord." "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse." "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

Now it may be objected, that this prophetic divination, and that even this prognosticating forecast, of what human conduct will be, precludes the possibility of its liberty. But is it not imperative, or God might be surprised? Does not His government demand an order of remedies and checks? Still passing by such questions, we will appeal to facts. God rules the world by a settled plan. Man decides from uncontrolled motive. We learn the former by Divine testimony: we know the latter by our consciousness. We never did any thing but freely. Fear may have been the motive, fear of evil if we did not act in that manner. But fear of evil is, in some sense, hope of good. Whatever form it took, it was motive. Obedience to motive, be that motive what it may, is freedom. Let us illustrate these positions by sacred history. The Egyptians were the instruments of God in punishing Israel: they indulged but their feelings of cruelty and rapacity in thus oppressing his people: "and the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God." The Assyrian was "the rod of His anger," and "the staff in their hand was his indignation:" but Sennacherib "meaned not so, neither did his heart think so:" his motives were altogether different and his own: "Wherefore it shall come to pass, that when the Lord hath performed his whole work, I will punish the fruit of the stout heart of the king of Assyria, and the glory of his high looks." "From that time forth began Jesus to show unto his disciples how that he *must* go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes,

and be killed." All this was necessary: not absolutely, but relatively, to a divine plan. "He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." He *must* die a particular death. Now there must be agents to inflict it as well as to decree it, to demand it, and to betray him to it. All were found, they were ready, they were eager,—"with wicked hands," hands fully responsible, because completely voluntary, "they crucified and slew him." It was a deliberated, complotted, wilful, earnest, deed. They had their way and pleasure. Still they knew not what they did. Herod, Pilate, Caiaphus, Judas, Centurion, Soldier, took their chosen part. Each followed his desire. Why? "Lord, thou art God! To do whatsoever Thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done."

This is the principle of the Text: "No man can come unto Me." It is reasoning upon what man is. It is forewarning of what man will do. It is the purview of omniscience concerning him. It shackles not his springs of conduct. It leaves him none otherwise than he was before. It is simple truth. It partakes of a more tender character. It pronounces not the sentence to drive him to despair. It were a gratuitous memorial of his helplessness were there not hope for him. It is the first intimation of mercy. O blessed light which reveals this tendency to evil only as our guilt and woe! Which searches the inward parts of that old man which is corrupt! Which causes us to feel that deeper and deeper defection is as a sure word of prophecy? Then only have we learnt the true estimate of our nature. "Wherefore we abhor ourselves." The last plea has fled! The last confidence is broken! The vessel is wholly marred! Now it is that we understand that plainest truth, hitherto hidden from us: "A corrupt tree cannot bring forth good fruit." Now it is that we deprecate as most tremendous the judicial abandonment of the sinner, which would "let him alone,"

or which would "give us up to our own heart's lust." Now it is that we desire to be "drawn," and pray that it may be "given unto us." "A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven."

But all these observations respect a state of mind which is peculiar. They exhibit it as unable to do what it is both its duty and interest to do. It is stated to be a want of power, and not of will. And this is the main enquiry. "No man *can* come." Such is the declaration of our Lord.

Let us consider,

IV. THE MORAL INCAPACITY WHICH IS THUS INVOLVED.

We all understand what is physical incapacity. I cannot climb to the stars. I cannot untwist the Alp from its root nor rock the Apennine on its base. My mechanical power, bodily considered, must be very limited. This is quite distinct from intellectual power. That we perceive, in regard to what remains to be known, is also very contracted. The vocabulary before us determines this power to consist in disposition. And though we rather anticipate our subsequent allegements, the following definition may explain the distinction on which physical and moral inability rests. *That is physical inability in which we could not if we would: that is moral inability in which we would not if we could.* The one respects what natural capacity is incompetent to accomplish: the other respects what moral disposition is disinclined to perform.

In the addresses of Jesus Christ to men, when he dwelt among us, we recognise a manner of speaking very nearly uniform while he lays open some vice in them. They are represented as unable, it is asserted that they "cannot," because of that vice. The impotency is of depraved passion. "How *can* ye believe, that seek honour of men, and seek not the honour which cometh from God only?" "How *can* ye, being evil, speak good things?" "Why do ye not understand my speech? Even because ye *cannot* hear my word?" It is obvious that if this

depraved passion had ceased, that if this sinful opposition had ceased, the *incapacity*, which was the consequence, would have ceased also. It exists only in such a connection; that is, only so long as that particular evil impediment exists.

But Scripture often resorts to such a style when this kind of moral indisposition is not the subject. It may be found in its history. "When the brethren of Joseph saw that their father loved him more than all his brethren, they hated him, and *could not* speak peaceably unto him." Their hatred alone constituted this inability: was there any other constraint?—It obtains in the simplest parable. The man who is awakened at midnight by the application of his friend, "from within answers, I *cannot* rise and give thee," yet importunity prevails. There was no inability, but a dislike of the disturbance.—Solemnly it is denounced: "It *cannot* be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem." There was no restriction, except the persecuting fury of its inhabitants.—Jehovah, to prove his love, demands? "*Can* a woman forget her sucking child? Yea, she may forget." Maternal love alone renders it impossible.—Christ in vindicating his disciples, enquires of the objectors to their conduct: "*Can* the children of the bride-chamber fast while the bridegroom is with them? as long as they have the bridegroom with them, they *cannot* fast." It is not necessity in either case, but only the rule of feeling.—Even in lighter appeals, though most seriously applied, it is asked: "*Can* a maid forget her ornaments, or a bride her attire?" Their interest in them alone prevents them.

The Deity employs the same standard of language concerning himself. Though we speak of his necessary excellence, we mean not excellence independent of will. Being essential and immutable, we are not able to think of it more highly than that it *must* exist in him. The contrary cannot be conceived. It is an inalienable and indefec-

tible perfection. We, indeed, but follow his own declaration. The absoluteness of his purity makes it impossible that he should act otherwise than he does. His independence is his holiness. "God that cannot lie." "He cannot deny himself." Thou canst not look on iniquity." "My mind could not be toward this people." "With him is no variableness or shadow of turning." "Thou art the same!"

And it may not be improper to add that this manner of speaking is adopted by us in our most common phrase. Nothing is more frequent than the assertion of men, in respect of certain conduct, that they could not, or that they only could, pursue it. We indignantly declare, that we are incapable of such an act, or that we feel it impossible not to perform such a purpose. We mean that our honour and probity forbid. We are held back by certain principles. But those principles are of our own approval and choice. Our tongue is as naturally free for falsehood, our hand for theft, our heart for malice, as those of other men. We might, we could, commit all these sins. But while our principles are in force, we cannot. We cannot, however, simply because we will not. So we transfer this language. We apply it to others. We speak as if we confidently foresaw what different persons must do. We speak thus upon their acknowledged principles. We are assured how the miser and the philanthropist will act. We say that the one cannot part with his pelf; and that the other cannot withhold his aid. The strength of habit enters into these calculations. "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Still we revert mainly to the different dispositions, the renewed or the unrenewed, nature of men. "A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil."

This cast of language, then, is no inadvertence. It is intentional. The design of it is to convince us that this is the tenour of our depravity. It is the invariable volition of man. Mistaken in the matter of his happiness and well-being, he acts upon the misleading motive. The direction is infallibly foreseen. This is the only necessity. Because he is free, he can only pursue one course. "So then they that are in the flesh *cannot* please God." "The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed *can* be." "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither *can* he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." "Never *able* to come to the knowledge of the truth."

Still it is objected, that no voluntary issue can be necessary. We want not the term. We care not for it. We utterly renounce it in any rigid, binding, inexorable, fatalistic, sense. Philosophic necessity is not this. Let it, however, be condemned. Discard it at once. But we can express a more just, and quite as full an idea, by other terms. Man is *sure* thus to err. There is *certainty* that he will sin. No man "can come,"—because no man will: no man will come, and therefore no man can.

Nevertheless, it may be asked, Is man now possessed of his perfect liberty? If it be certain that he will only act in one way, is that to be free? If such certainty be incompatible with liberty, then the redeemed in heaven, kept from falling, are not free: then angels, those sinless essences, are not free: then God, who cannot be tempted, is not free.

But we admit that man is not free as a holy creature is. His liberty is prostituted. His judgment is warped. His passions tyrannise. He is fallen. All which his nature dictates as motive corresponds to his fallen state. But in the free quality of his actions he was never less coerced. What he does seemeth good to him. He has done what-

soever he listed. He follows the devices of his own heart. Being "abominable and filthy he drinketh iniquity like water." "His heart gathereth iniquity to itself." "They draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with a cart-rope."

Is he a slave? So does the word of God describe him. How can he then be free? Free he is not in opposition to slavery, but this is a change in the use of the term. Voluntary freedom is his, though not spiritual. The liberty of a holy creature is to be obliged by divine law. "He walks at liberty when he seeks these precepts." The sinful creature is in bondage. "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be holden with the cords of his sins." But he is readily and intently the slave. He "serves divers lusts and pleasures."

Is he a captive? So does the word of God describe him. He is under "the power of Satan." He is in "the snare of the Devil, taken captive by him at his will." How can he, then, be free? Again we protest against the different employment of the term. He is not free from his Enemy, but he is still voluntarily free. He has sold himself for nought. The captivity is chosen by him; he is content with it: he desires not that it should be turned.

Is he a creature whose will is overpowered? So does the word of God describe the regenerate man. "When I would do good, evil is present with me." "To will is present with me, but how to perform that which is good I find not." But this is not the description of man in general, but of a class. They who are born of God have a paramount aim to serve him. Nevertheless sinful inclinations and capabilities are still in them. Whatever they do, they at the time do from the will, from a motive,—yet is it not their greatest and generally predominant desire. It interferes with it: it contradicts it. Two different orders of disposition are found in their mind. Are there, then, two wills? Not at any one mo-

ment. But in successive moments the will of the mind may vary. It is swayed by different motives. But this can only be true of a Christian, the new creature. He is spiritually minded. The motions of sin, however, are not extinguished in him. The spirit is willing when the flesh is weak. He feels the promptings of two dispositions: The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and the Spirit against the flesh. So far his inability is accountable. He "cannot do the things which he would." He confesses it: he seeks its forgiveness and subjugation. On the other hand, the sinner knows but one desire of sin. With him is no contest. That which the Christian "would," he would not. Unrenewed men make none other choice. They have "only done evil before God from their youth: they have only provoked him to anger." Nor is it any movement of good in the unregenerate that they are said to "loathe themselves for their iniquities." This is but the disgust of sated passion and the apprehension of impending judgment. "I will seek it yet again."

We see in the foregoing statements the only incapacity of sinful man. Joshua said unto the people, "Ye cannot serve the Lord." Jesus, his prototype, said: "No man can come unto me." The human mind is not mutilated: it is deprived of no power which it could ever boast. Its voluntary liberty is as unhampered as it was at its creation. Its regard to happiness is the motive which is natural to it, and without which it could not exercise volition. Its only proper inability is to act otherwise than according to its inclinations: in other words, it is only unable to act otherwise than a free agent. Therefore, He not only declared, "No man can come,"—but to those very parties he explained the reason: "Ye will not come unto me that ye may have life." This is attested by the consciousness of all. When we read the language spoken of old,—"They came, every one whose heart stirred him up, and every one whom his spirit made

willing,"*—we read our interior selves. Why do we not serve the Lord? Our heart is not prepared nor engaged. We "set" it not. If there was compulsion there could not be sin. If there was defect of intellectual power, there could not be sin. But what is the truth? "The hearts of the sons of men are set in them to do evil." "Israel would none of me." "We desire not the knowledge of Thy ways." "Men love darkness rather than light, because their deeds are evil." Is the mental power deficient? God asks nothing more than what the sinner now devotes to Satan and to sin. Serve Him as you served the other lords who have had dominion over you, and this is all he demands. You *can* believe, for you have believed falsehood: believe in God. You can love, for you have loved idols: love God. You *can* love God with all your heart and all your soul, for so you have loved his creature: love God supremely. You *can* repent, for you are sorry for every bitter fruit of sin: repent towards God. Here is no deficiency of mental power. If your dispositions were right, it would be far easier for you to believe in Him, to repent towards him, to love him, than any other object. He will only call us to account for whatever he has entrusted to us. "To every man according to his several ability." He will not "take up that he laid not down, nor reap that he did not sow." "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that a man hath not."

The confusion is, then, in the minds of men, not in the proper truth of things. Mind only cannot when it will not. But then mind only takes its proper range. In that range will is our only law. The distinction may be overlooked. In vulgar speech we hear men speak of the difference in the loosest way. They say a thing is morally impossible, which is only physically: that a thing

* Exod. xxxv. 21.

is physically impossible, which is only morally. To do a miracle, to a mere mortal, is physically impossible: to belie the truth, to a holy being, is morally impossible. To see with a blind eye is a physical impossibility: to reject a prejudice, to him who loves the error, is a moral impossibility. A few concluding statements will perhaps make the subject clear. Oh that they may leave it with full impression upon you! May we be "manifest in your consciences!"

1. Man ought to be simply considered as a creature of blame. We cannot too tenderly compassionate him. But we are in danger of speaking of him as the subject of misfortune. There is nothing of itself faulty in the epithet, when we address or apostrophise him as "poor sinner:" yet by it he seems to be betrayed into something of self-palliation. It has often suggested to him an inevitable calamity. He is flattered, or, at least, soothed, as the victim of a resistless catastrophe. It is to him an infliction which he cannot help. He sees that he is more pitied for his wretchedness than impeached for his guilt. He is soothed. All such impression must be counteracted. It perils the soul. The sinner must be undeceived. This is not a hapless state. "This is his wickedness, because it is bitter, because it reacheth unto his heart."

2. Instead of reducing the arduousness of the sinner's salvation, the view we urge renders it most serious and extreme. It is lightly said, Then nothing is wanted to secure it but our will. This was not always true. Redemption by the crucified Son of God was needed. But this has been achieved. The scheme of evangelic teaching was necessary. But this has been supplied. The Holy Ghost must work all in us. But He is given to all them who ask him. Now nothing more is wanted to the sinner's salvation than the will to be thus saved. Nothing stands between him and his salvation but the misdirection of his will. But you have in this view, stated the most

tremendous difficulty. This is the great mountain: This is the great gulf. What hinderance is insuperable as this? Not willing, not desiring, to be saved! Throwing around the soul one circle of resistance and repulsion! Determining its whole course so that it may not be converted and healed! Seeking death! Rushing on destruction! There is no obstacle like this! It is the impossibility. "Why will ye die?"

3. The nature of Regeneration is thus unfolded to us. No new powers of a mental kind are included in it. We confuse ourselves when we call it a principle, or any thing which supposes an addition to the soul. It is that simple soul now delighting itself upon the word of the truth of the gospel. It believes it. It has the love of its truth. The old things which pass away from it are not any of its former faculties and affections, but their sinful objects: the all things which become new are not an intellectual increment, but the same essence in a new pursuit. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power." Such is the promise. "For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do." Such is the fulfilment. The Holy Spirit, in the conversion of the sinner's will, secures his salvation. Only could he be saved in concurrence with his will. This is all that can be meant by a new heart and a right spirit. What can we desire for the unrenewed race of man more than this? "O that there were such a heart in them!"

4. We learn what is the highest liberty of man. He must be the subject of motive, or he could not be free. When he chooses good because he desires it, his freedom is beheld in its purest form and noblest attitude. Religion sets this good before him, and the Divine influence inspires this desire. Never were men more free than the apostles when they said: "We *cannot* but speak the things which we have seen and heard." The exceeding greatness of power which can alone renew the soul is thus vindi-

cated. Why is it required? To turn the Will. What revolution can be compared to this effect? What Power inferior to this could sway its mysterious springs? It is not blinded, it is not forced. It is an intelligent process to which it yields. Is it dealt with contrary to its laws and habits? There is a most exact conformity to them. It is one operation of motive. It is one zest of good. This is liberty. Is it the less, because the Father of Spirits has wrought that operation and kindled that zest? Is He alone forbidden to suggest inducement and persuasive? May He, of all, not have access to the spirit which he has made? These, then, have "come." They are not dragged. They have exercised a personal act and volition. But it would not have been voluntary agency without a motive. That motive, the essential of freedom, is supposed. It is "given to them." They are "drawn."

5. The overtures of the gospel are thus shown to be most reasonable. Man is a creature of perfect mental conformation for all that he is bound to do. He is not required to remember without memory nor to judge without judgment. These overtures respect nothing but what is most easy in itself; some course of thought or action which, in another relation, is hourly taking place. The apostles call upon men to put it into practice. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ." "Pray if the thought of thy heart may be forgiven thee." "Be converted." "God commandeth all men every where to repent." They never inform them that they cannot. That is a supplement of more modern teaching. They spoke, "as of sincerity, as of God." How consistent! How rational! Disinclination exclusively unfitted men to obey. Could this be excuse? Could the kingdom of heaven be arrested in its march because of this disaffection?—Besides, these overtures are Divine means to an end: "Look, ye blind, that ye may see."

6. The proper ground, on which the necessity of Divine

influence can only be rested, is placed before us. It is not necessary to complete and justify moral government. That is a system of rule always adapted to the condition of its subjects. It is unchanged from the beginning. We are changed, but in no such manner as can absolve us from its authority. But had we ceased to be intelligent, we must have ceased to be now accountable. God's ways are equal. His commandments are not grievous. They were given for life. They are ordained for good. We possess sufficient understanding to comply with them: the understanding is the same to which they were originally addressed. But it is turned aside from them: and they work wrath. Is the Deity bound to furnish us with the will to keep his law, or to perform any of those evangelic duties which are but modifications of his law? That Influence must be an extra-judicial favour: its bestowment in any respect of moral government would be to weaken and dishonour it. But it is necessary to salvation. No sinner would seek that salvation by a single step, but as this induced him. That salvation is by grace: this is its appropriate adjunct and causal power.

7. This is a most humbling fact. It leaves nothing to the sinner of boast and pretension. All must be done for him in redeeming him; all must be done for him in applying that redemption. He is as helpless as he is immeritorious. O sinner, to what art thou fallen! Thou hast not even the desire that it were not thus with thee! Thou possessest not the secret will to be restored! Thou couldst not sink lower than this! Thou couldst not be more utterly wicked! And yet does sinful man even now speak proud things! He complains of this. He is made nought! Nothing is reserved by which he may distinguish himself! His last surviving hold of pride and self-sufficiency, *the determining power of his will in spite of his affections*,—strange jargon of absurdity as well as audacious babble of sin!—is taken from him! "I am

nothing: I can do nothing." What guilt is on the lips which speak this querulous strain! Yet, were it really felt and sincerely deplored, it would be the strain of hope. So convinced, so penetrated, so abashed, so overwhelmed, under the sense of this most guilty and wicked nothingness,—you shall be complete in Christ, you shall be filled with the Spirit!

8. Any injury that may have befallen our mental capacity lies within our accountability. It is spiritually blind. It is darkness. The light that is in us is darkness. But this is sin. The deceitfulness of sin has made our hearts deceitful above all things. Our understanding errs and wilders in falsehood and infatuation. But its default is not of power but of direction. Its weakness is now seen, because it cannot reason with strength upon folly and depravity. When it is exercised upon truth and righteousness it resumes its strength. If our understanding be darkened, if our hearts be hardened, these effects are produced by a moral cause. We are disinclined. Is this our acquittal? Then the greater the wickedness the readier the excuse.

9. Nor is there any mitigation to be found in the transmission of the evil from father to descendant. The difficulty we have not slurred. But, then, what is the evil? Is it something which we disclaim, abhor, renounce? Assuredly, were it so, it would be most unjust. For any impediment to good it offered we could not be held liable. If, however, the evil is what we love, is what we will, of what consequence is its origin? It is our chosen course. "We have loved idols; and after them we will go." It is strange to complain of a necessity in our own allowed motives and our own unshackled volitions. Prove that you must sin, whatever be your contrary will, and you are irresponsible and guiltless; if it is only that you will sin and will to sin, God charges you with nothing more and will punish you for nothing less!

But it is time that these statements and reasonings should end. Men feel themselves wrong, they know that they dissemble, when they ask them. Their consciousness glares upon them the truth. They are betrayed by their own stiff-necked and stout-hearted protests. They speak out of the froward mouth and with perverse lips. They would sophisticate. They understand the matter after all. Their objections, however subtle, belie their own hearts. Their studied shifts and cavils are "a vanity tossed to and fro of them that seek death." They deny that there can be difference between the ability which is natural and moral. But they shall be at last convinced. The distinction shall be fearfully explained. We have hitherto spoken of that which is moral: men believe not, repent not, pray not, only because they will not. They enjoy every privilege, every opportunity, every means. God calls, but they refuse. He stretches out his hands, and no man regards. It is all in vain. They make the word of God of none effect. "They are like the deaf adder that stoppeth her ear; which will not hearken to the voice of charmers, charming never so wisely." "They reject the counsel of God against themselves." "They put it away from them." "They wrong their own souls." The appeal is to their nature in its highest and most active principles. "Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right?" Why is not the gospel embraced? "They made light of it." Man's wilful indifference, man's wicked indisposition, rising into hatred and contempt of it, assign the only cause. All is defeated by his aversion. "Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool to get wisdom, seeing that he hath no heart to it?" But another inability shall soon be proclaimed! It shall not consist in the want of will. The will is strong and perfect. It rests in a necessity the most unyielding and irreversible. It is restriction, physical, inflexible, eternal. It never opposed your salvation until now. Hitherto you alone

withstood that salvation. It has at last raised its invincible front. The bars of iron, the bars of the earth, the bars of the sea, the bars of the pit, have all been loosened, but this never can. While what you might have done shall be seen, now is seen what you can never do. "Many shall *seek* to enter in, and *shall not be able!*" From hell is no escape. "They *cannot pass* that *would* come from thence!"

SERMON X.

JESUS CHRIST THE CAUSE AND THE CONSUMMATOR OF ALL THINGS.

Heb. i. 10—12.

And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the Foundation of the Earth; and the Heavens are the Works of thine Hands: they shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a Garment; and as a Vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but Thou art the same, and Thy Years shall not fail.

This quotation is connected with some preceding ones,—this the initial copulative declares: it is, indeed, the last of five passages taken from the Old Testament scriptures, and all similarly applied. The apostrophe winds up a series of inspired texts, closely linked together by repeated and unfailing references to a fixed aim, a common object. "And again," sounds at every interval, and prevents any break. It is the intimation of a treasured fulness which could yield stores of proof and of point a hundred-fold more than those which are now adduced. And none will doubt that it was originally an invocation to the Supreme.* Few will, however, doubt that it has in the present instance a peculiar use. It must exactly follow the scope of the other recitals. They—who will deny or can controvert?—indicate "the Son," our Lord

* Psa. cii. 25—27.

Jesus Christ. This being employed for the same purpose, necessarily falls into the same direction and train of argument. It is spoken of, it is addressed to, the identical Person whom all the rest intend. Indeed, on any other supposition, we might ask,—wholly waiving the force of the illative conjunction,—why such an appeal to the Deity should, amidst this specific reasoning, be entertained and urged. Sometimes a doxology swells abruptly from the heart of a sacred writer when he recounts a deliverance wrought in a very signal manner, and at a crisis very unexpected. But this kind of sudden rapture always guards itself. It is a fine parenthesis, which helps rather than delays or entangles the course of illustration and remark. This, however, is not assimilated to such an order of outbursts and acclaims. It is argumentative gradation and reinforcement. Each previously quoted verse might, with equal plausibility, be alleged to constitute an ecstacy of gratitude and worship to the "God of our praise."

Since the glosses of the Racovian schoolmen upon this sacred expression of the truest homage toward the Messiah, it has been generally abandoned as hopelessly impracticable by their successors. They know not how to deal with it. It is set immoveably here. Their criticism, their powers of conjectural emendation, cannot reach the difficulty nor avail their hope. The foundations cannot be destroyed. How they understand it, their contrivances to narrow it, their ingenuities in garbling it, we leave to themselves. Let them ask their conscience or their reason, whether this can be done in the spirit of genuine candour or sound interpretation. We can accept it only in one way. We seek none other. The majesty of the Redeemer is no unwelcome theme. Its sweet savour comes wafting over us as a gale which has rifled the fragrance of Paradise. Yet the beauty, the grandeur, the desirableness, of the doctrine which reveals his Deity, are not its grounds

of authority nor its titles to belief. These must stand in independence. And what supports of truth are so strong, so complete, so impregnable, as the testimonies of the Holy Ghost,—of Him who "searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God,"—of him who is "the Spirit of Christ,"—of him who spake by the prophets,—of him who anointed the apostles,—of him who inspired both Testaments,—of him who taketh of the things of Christ and showeth them to us? The Holy Ghost witnesseth, —if words have meaning, if statements have purpose, if arguments have issue,—to the eternity, to the immutableness, to the original creative causation, to the final dissolving prerogative, of that mysterious Visitant, who, after living on our earth thirty and three years, was in all that is passive to suffering and susceptible of death, nailed to a cross and buried in a grave!

To the Jews is this argument, based on the appropriation of "the lively oracles which belonged to them," propounded. Not the glories of the Christ offended them, but that they should be claimed for a Christ crucified. But the author,—beyond question Paul himself,—did not spare nor soothe their prejudices. He places the awful theme before them,—the theme which is indifferent to no man, which every man who thinks upon it warmly loves or vehemently contradicts. He plants this ensign in the very front. Did they know "the voices of their prophets?" Then must they admit that Jesus of Nazareth was, in a sense which annihilates competition, the Son of God,—whom all angels were bound to worship,—whose throne, as the throne, and being the throne, of Divinity, was for ever and ever,—to sum up all, that he was the maker and ultimate disposer of the universe. And this not only determines the sanction of this writer in thus applying the ancient predictions, but implies that to the persons, for whose conviction they are accumulated and impressed, nothing would seem violently wrested nor fancifully constrained.

Among ourselves the question may arise, Was this appeal to the Deity, in the first instance, irrespective of personal distinction, or presented to the Second Person? *Our* reading would favour the former view,—were it only found in its original connection that view would be inevitable. But when an Apostle, speaking beneath an afflatus certainly not inferior to that of the Psalmist, gives it this turn, stamps upon it this image and superscription,—without that effort and explanation which a possibility of another sense and purport might not only demand but spontaneously suggest,—then, is it not demonstrated that the Holy Spirit is of one mind, and, in both his organs, is consistent with Himself? We rise now above any hypothesis of accommodation or of secondary meaning: all is inceptive and transcendental. Can language be more lofty and magnificent? Can its ministration be more definite and direct? Can its efficiency to establish the supremacy of our Saviour be more stringent and peremptory?

Let us, Dear Christians, meditate on this stupendous fact. Far be it from us to excuse or to refine it, as though we were ashamed that it should enter into our creed. Take heed that ye be not spoiled of it. Maintain it in all its absolute, literal, definitive, avowal. In nothing soften, attenuate, reconcile, it. Attempt to simplify it by no speculation, to naturalise it by no analogy. Reduce no feature of its awe. Adore it in its most fathomless mystery. Glorify it in its infinite extreme. If it confound us by its greatness, if it compel the intellect to shrink into itself and to turn giddy within us by its excessive wonder,—it is fraught with sweet consolation, it wears a pleasant aspect, it touches every sensibility of the renewed heart,—to you who believe how unutterably is it precious! You "say that Jesus is the Lord by the Holy Ghost!"

It will become us to dwell upon THREE THINGS in the discussion of the Text.

I. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE ASCRIPTION.

We are transported to a distant period, ere time had, in its strictest sense, begun, or the mechanism of its notations had received shape or being. The revolutions of this firmament had not commenced, nor was there a sign for seasons. Nothing is necessary but God. All else is but an effect of his pleasure and power. It is, or it is not, according to his will. Creation is only a contingent state of things. But He, of whom we speak, is indispensably primary and anterior, because he is the former of all things. "Without him was not any thing made that was made." "The beginning," then, is extraneous to whatever has occurred, or can occur, in this vast physical constitution: it marks a purview in whose plan all was digested, and a might by whose unfolding energies all was reared. How well does this agree with the pretensions of Jesus, who is the first and the last! His "goings forth were of old, from everlasting!" *When* he saw good he *began* to work. It was his own time. No existence can be independent of him. "By him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist." He composed matter, he gave life, he communicated spirit. Some of the stages in this formative process may be traced.

He "laid the foundations of the earth:" a figure which signifies his stability. That stability rests on certain laws which he has ordained. Atom coheres to atom, both yield to a common centre. Some nucleus, or pole, there is which binds together all. Hung upon nothing, it requires not bar nor base. Massed into compactness by its attractive, sustained in its velocity by its repellent, forces,—what precision is so nice, what certitude is so exact? Balanced in air, wheeling through space, unrelaxingly firm, buoyantly light, heaving on its own axis, yet floating through the

azure as a winged thing,—what an adjustment, what a magazine, what a glory, is our earth! Well may its "foundations" be commemorated, for, "abideth it not," in comparison with all beside, "for ever?" What is so immoveable, though restless with movement? Nor is this all; far larger notices must be indulged. This planet is but as a portal and a platform whence we may look out and gaze our full on a theatre of unimaginable limits, of insufferable splendours. "Who hath meted out heaven with a span? Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their hosts by number: not one faileth." "The heavens are the works of his hands." He garnished them with all their exquisite furniture, drew their orbits, studded their stars. His "fingers" wove that splendid web. And "when we consider his heavens," with what admiration are we overwhelmed! Magnitudes, distances, systems, parallelisms, still rise upon us. When we think that we all but touch the flaming bounds, new projectiles seem just acquiring a fresh-born impulse, and start forth in their untrodden paths; yet seems there uniform relationship, and somewhere is doubtless a pivot for the equipoise of the mighty whole! Unlike the pageant-show, where closer inspection dissipates every illusory impression, these "works" of the Saviour's "hands" only brighten, expand, and multiply, the higher that you ascend, the farther that you traverse, the more that you explore! And what an indefinableness do these conceptions impart to the incarnation of our blessed Lord! Did he "lay the foundations of the earth?" "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." Are "the heavens the works of his hands?" How often were they his only curtain and tent to dwell in!

But this ascription not only predicates his creative greatness, and how he produced the entire universe,—it

proclaims that all these effects are now at *his disposal and under his control.* Observe his *independence* of them. They are not built for eternity. They shall "perish." Utter destruction may not be meant, but perhaps only the idea subsequently announced, "they shall be changed." Yet they shall pass away, whatever their modification: "there shall be found no place for them." He "remains." They were only his ordinances. They have run their course. They have performed their function. They helped not him. They were created by him and for him. His power and facility of action are not impaired by their abrogation. He willed their existence, and he has withdrawn them. Their perdition and change shake not his throne nor obscure his glory. There, on his peerless seat, he sits unmoved; in all the fulness of the Godhead he remains, as though creation had never sprung up at his fiat nor had fled away from before his face! Still He is the I AM!

Mark His *identity* among them. They are the subjects of incessant revolution and variation. There is a constant disturbance in the natural system, things take new forms and circumstances; and though principles are unaltered, the dispositions under them are often the most strange and unexpected. The very elements around us "wax old as doth a garment." We discern not in them the symptoms of decay and dissolution; but it is probable that these attach to their antiquity. They are wearing out. They are ready to vanish away. The robe, though still sumptuous, may present indications of waste and injury concealed from our eye. Of what creature can it be affirmed, amidst this universal vicissitude, that he is "the same?" What creature, however noble and sinless, may boast such a property as this? Not only of men "is there none abiding;" even the holy progression of angels forbids one stationary degree. Only can Deity say: "I change not." But this is true of Immanuel, God with

us. He is infinite perfection, forbidding augmentation and decline. He "filleth all in all." "His years" are his immortality; and, "unlike the days of our years," they do not "fail." He gives to us "eternal life;" he is therefore possessed of it. "This is the true God, and eternal life,"—"the life," essential and exhaustless, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever!"

Trace His *power* over them. Nothing, once dependent and derived, can exist in defiance of his will. And what is there, or can there be, which this category does not include? We may change the forms of many a substance, but it becomes permanent in those newer forms; nor can we disintegrate them again—they scorn our further power. But the Saviour, who claims "all power in heaven and earth," gives to the universe its only possible duration. It exists only in his pleasure,—it is pliant to him as "a vesture;" and when it has done his bidding, he need not strive with the works of his hands, nor contend against them, but has only to "fold the vesture up!" What an infinite ease, what a simple readiness, does this language suppose! This earth with its mountain-ridges and deep places, those heavens with their gorgeous arch and endless illumination, are no more to Him than a mantle which he has for a little space of time been pleased to dispread, and which he can as unlabouringly bind again within its girdle, and lay aside! And this is not the possibility of his omnipotence alone. He shall "perform this." "The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night: in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burnt up."

Thus is the Lord Jesus exhibited to us! He "lays the foundations of the earth,"—"the heavens are the works of his hands"—amidst their change and portended ruin he "remains," he is "the same,"—with him awaits the

dissolution of all things. He must be greater than those operations which he commands, "inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house." He must be apprised of the final causes of those operations which proceed from his unaided skill, and the more so, as, otherwise, he might close the great consummation with their imperfect fulfilment. Who, then, is this? "God *over all.*"

Now what are ascriptions like this, but methods of praise? "Ascribe ye greatness to God." Nothing is more common in the sacred records than to make them the vehicles for honouring him, by reporting and magnifying his agency. Why do we triumph in the works of his hands? Why do we publish his mighty acts? Why are they sought out of all them who have pleasure therein? Why do we roam through every department of nature, examine its interminable series of adaptations, the bird's bright plumage and caroling song, the insect's gauzy pinion and life-long dance, the wild flower's vermilion flush and modest grace, the very sea-weed's air-vessel by which it leaves the caverns of the deep, as though it should have its hour of joy, career along the wave, and catch a hue from the sunbeam? Do we not go at once to the "Parent of good," and cry, "These are thy glorious works?" "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all." "Thy tender mercies are over all thy works." "All thy works praise thee, O Lord, and thy saints bless thee!"

Than such ascription nothing can be more sublime. It gathers a tribute from every age of time, from every realm of creation, and lays it at Messiah's feet. To him it devotes the universe as one altar. To him it lifts the voice of all as in one song. It stretches from the beginning to the end of all things. And well does it coincide with the nature of Him who had a glory with the Father "before the *world was.*" He is the Alpha and the Omega, the ALMIGHTY.

It is proper that we now ascertain

II. THE VALUE OF THE ARGUMENT.

The averment, conveyed in a solemn form of worship, is, that the Lord Jesus is the efficient and producing cause of whatever subsists, elemental or compounded, supernal or terrestrial, to the very substratum and nexus of all that impresses our sense—"that by Him are all things, and we by him."

We must, at this point of the projected proof, look into our mind. There we behold a law, or a certainty of mental condition, which conducts us back from any result to a causative power. At the hazard of being derided for admitting the idea of power into this connection; we contend that a simple order and consecution of time does not express this law, or necessary state, of mind. We do believe that the mind invariably presumes and proceeds on a transitiveness in such cause upon such effect: that they are not only necessary to each other in arrangement, but as the medium and recipient. It is of little importance, save for the sake of truth, how we surmise concerning these matters in ordinary life: but we may soon find that the scepticism, which first mooted the *inefficiency of cause*, knows how to avail itself in every religious argument of our blind and witless acquiescence. But there is something more that we may learn from the common manifestations of mental inference. We pass beyond a mere notion of general power. We inspect a vast machine. Here is every dynamic efficient. Spring vibrates to spring, cylinder rolls on cylinder, wheel revolves in wheel. The most complex and opposite actions are combined. We are not satisfied in the discovery of the first moving force. Whatever it may be, it is unintelligent. We conclude, therefore, that the suggestion of the apparatus was not by one or any of the material agents employed. What do we pronounce in respect of all that mechanical construction and equipment? That it emanated from that which is

not there,—that it is the fruit of thought,—that it is the out-birth from some hidden, and, it may be, unknown intellect.

But it will be objected,—May there not be a something without necessitating a cause? a something which antedates a cause? a something without which a cause could not exist? Is not that unoriginated something to be found in infinite space? In reply, we are perfectly willing to allow all that imagination can require for its conception of this idea, that is,—the limit of space when you press upon it may be always made to recede. The limit is in space or it is not. If not, what but space can lie beyond? But it may not have occurred to the objector that, but for *existence* occupying portions of that space, giving him all his means of understanding void and complement, dimension and interval, space would answer to no idea of the human mind, and no idea of the human mind would quadrate to space. Even now our purest mastery of it is but of that which cannot be contrariwise supposed: and did no creation occcupy it, had no actual measurement presented it to us, we should never have been able to guess the vacuum, "the great inane." So far it resembles immortality. We dream of immortality, because we know what is counted time. We dream of infinity, because we know what is defined location. And the processes of thought concerning them are just the same. We do not understand immortality; but when we have computed the largest amount of duration, we fancy something more in futurity still. We do not understand infinity; but when we have swept the largest boundary of space, we fancy something more remote in immensity still. Yet as to any independence of eternity and infinity upon Deity, we feel no embarrassment. He is from everlasting. He inhabiteth eternity. Does he not fill heaven and earth? But for the King eternal, immortal, invisible, space and eternity would be no truths,

because answering to no facts. But thus sciolists and scoffers talk in our days! A more specious resistance is offered to the argument of our Text in favour of Christ's divinity,—How, it is asked, can an infinite power be deduced from a finite effect? Whatever the range of creation, it must be confined in strict limitations. To this we reply:

1. Every effect of Divine power must be inferior to that power,—that is, must be finite. It can create no rival being. It can produce nothing to be compared with its independence. It must work at an infinite distance from itself. If, then, the demonstration of a Deity from his works were to rest upon the equality of those works to his excellence and greatness, that fact must remain for ever in disproof. But "the invisible things of him from the creation of the world have been clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." The argument, if invalid, is so for a Creator at all. It falsifies what was always hitherto judged sufficient: "Now he who built all things is God."

2. Upon the creative claim God has always been pleased to found his challenge of supremacy and exaction of worship. We are taunted, How know we that he could not distinguish a creature and qualify him as his minister in this service? From what can it be shown that a mediation of such a rank might not have been employed? To us, in answer, we will say, it has always seemed rash to deny that such interposition might have occurred. Whatever its superficial difficulties, it might have consisted with the possibility of the case. It becomes not us to adjudge what the Holy One, whom none can limit, may transfer and depute. We think that we thus take a safer ground, and retreat to it from a very dubious, or, at least, a very assailable, one. Upon the palpable fact that God is the Creator, does he place his right to our adora-

tion and obedience. We are bound, by his own rules, only to proper affections and duties toward him so far as it can be proved that he gave us our being. "Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard? that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? There is no searching of his understanding." Then, *whoever* is the Creator, he is the *Supreme*. "Know ye that the Lord, he is God. It is he who hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him and bless his name." Then, *whoever* is the *Creator*, he is the exclusive object of *worship*. "Fear God and give glory to him, and worship him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters." Then, *whoever* is the Creator, he is the terminating centre of all *exaltation* and *subjection*. "Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory, and honour, and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they exist, and were created." Then, *whoever* is the Creator, he acted upon his Sovereign will. "Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well-doing as unto a faithful Creator." Then, *whoever* is the Creator, he is the great disposing power of our precious and never-dying spirits. Then, *whoever* is Jesus Christ, because he has laid the foundations of the earth and since the heavens are works of his hands, he is Supreme, is entitled to worship, is authorised to require our service, is gloriously independent, and will pronounce the sentence of our endless destiny!

3. The works of creation are designed to be monumental of their immediate Author. When we investigate them, they speak a splendid panegyric to his fame. "The heavens declare the glory of God, the firmament showeth his handy-work." They are the signals of his might, and skill, and love. The stars are sent round the universe as

his heralds and torch-bearers, making proclamation and flashing evidence how glorious he is who launched and lighted them. His is the strength of the hills, and the beauty of the woods, and the freshness of the rivers, and the voice of the seas, and the lustre of the stars. All shadow his greatness, all type his care. "How excellent is his name in all the earth!" The universal framework stands for him, his witness and his court! His right it is! To him doth it appertain! So does the volume of nature, not only by associative charm but by express design, testify of Christ! What flower shall not recall the Rose of Sharon? what planet not reveal the Bright and Morning Star? What wisdom and power, which have their emblems here, shall not lead us to see these attributes more awfully and more tenderly displayed in the atoning cross? What a softening interest passes over the face of this fair earth and those resplendent heavens, when they contain his image and rehearse his praise,—when they furnish one ceaseless memorial of him,—when they address the Sufferer of Calvary, as if they had suddenly become instinct and vocal with an irrepressible gratitude, —"Thou, Lord, didst in the beginning lay the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands." We proceed to

III. The enforcement of the conclusion.

The truth of the theme being once allowed, its influence will be instantaneous. Not for a moment can it remain an indifferent sentiment. Like a powerful magnet, it will not only draw all around it, but impregnate all within its stream. It will resemble the kindling of a sun amidst orbs which had hitherto rolled in night. It is the life and riches of Christianity. It renders all its statements consistent, and alone can redeem them from extravagance. Let it be believed, and all the doctrines of the gospel follow in a necessary order, as very corollaries. In nothing can exaggeration be practised, whether we speak of the

Saviour's "love which passeth knowledge," or of the soul whose loss a world could not countervail or of "the exceeding sinfulness of sin." It gives "wisdom" to the "mystery." It is as exponent, justification, and safeguard, to the whole.

1. It is supposed by the incarnation,—but what illustrations does that marvel derive from the descriptions of the Text! The suspense of generations, the travail of ages, had not been too strong. Hieroglyphic and prophecy had soared to no excess. "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." "God was manifest in the flesh." "The style of his humanity, that he is the Son of man, becomes henceforth paramount. This is only strange. "He is come in the flesh!" "He is found in fashion as a man!" Man as no other man can be! Man in a way that leaves him transcendently greater and more! Man by an act of the most astonishing condescension and self-diminution! Man solely for a purpose of the purest grace! "One man, Jesus Christ!" When *we* think of him as *God*, then is all our wonder; *angels* feel their only wonder when they think of him as *man*. In the first, there is no change: in the second is an ineffable, inconceivable, transformation. The one is necessary nature, whatever was, whatever must be: the other is displacement, depression, humiliation, the assumption of mortality, the embrace of death! "Behold the man!" "He laid the foundations of the earth" where he hath not a place to lay his head. "The heavens are the works of his hands," though they beat on him with their tempests, and chill him with their dews; though their stars hold watch over him when his soul is sorrowful unto death. He formed the instruments of all the suffering he endured. He caused the thorns to grow which were knotted round his brow,—he prepared the worm that spun the flaunting attire which mocked his person,—he sent down into the ground the fibres of the tree which gave the wood that

was fashioned for his cross,—he veined the mine whose ore was converted into nail and spear-head to transfix his flesh,—he withdrew the restraints from our fallen nature, and let loose all its enmities on himself!

2. The character of that expiation, which is the first quality and intention of his death, will be greatly determined by a representation such as this. The merit of an atoning act will altogether depend on the disposition and worthiness of the party who presents it. The disposition should include every sentiment of respect for him to whom the atonement is offered, every just appreciation of his claim and of the wrong which has been done to him, every readiness to repair it to the full. It must accompany and inform the whole transaction. Nor can the mediation of every party be allowed. High attributes of worthiness must inhere in him who takes up the quarrel, and offers the vindication of it. Who shall interpose between God and man, between the dishonoured law and the offender? That Surety must have a perfect knowledge of the tremendous dilemma. And did not He, who "laid the foundations of the earth," understand the moral order which he then established, the holy law which he gave, the system of good which he instituted? Who could be equally cognizant of its excellence! Who could be equally intent upon its restoration? Who, like its Creator, could know the requirements it involved for taking away the sin of this world? And if it be demanded, What right had the crucified One to interpose? The text is the prompt and ample response. If "the heavens are the works of his hands," then may he "bow them and come down." It is to purge his creation that he descends. It is to subdue the anarchy which is destroying it that he enters into a capacity for suffering and death. None but the Maker can bring back the alienated creature. None but God can satisfy God. And this is the divine method of magnifying the law. He will accept

no aid from the proud-doers. His arm shall bring salvation. He will tread the wine-press alone. Let not unbelief insinuate or exclaim, How improbable! How can it be! Who stretched abroad the heavens? Who laid the foundations of the earth? "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are *my* ways higher than your ways, and *my* thoughts than your thoughts."

3. He who has done all this achievement of power and goodness in creating the universe, designed our redemption to be the great object and glory of it. The reason why the Son of God is repeatedly and preeminently signalised in his Personality as the Creator, must be found in this remark. Being in reference to the mediatorial scheme, it was a mediatorial act. He was the "Lamb verily foreordained before the foundation of the world." Hence being wrought in *office subordinate* to the Father, we need not be surprised at occasional intimations of a subserviency even here. With his immense comprehension of all things, he looked down from heaven on the children of men. Among them a purpose was to be accomplished which alone could explain all else that he had accomplished. Taking place in "this building," it was to affect all known intelligences and to reach their farthest abodes. "Glory to God was in the highest." "Into these things the angels desire to look." The spirits of darkness and evil stood the affrighted spectators of the scene. It is no episode in the drama of the universe, no appendage to its history,—it is the key to its intricacy and the moral of its evolution. It is no passing event, it belongs to all duration,—it is no matter of confined interest, it is written for all worlds. We know not how the intelligence has spread,—we know not that which other beings have understood and felt of it; but we cannot repress the thought, that the remotest dwelling-place of the feeblest star, twinkling in the remotest depth of space, has caught the story and rings with approving anthems of wonder,

joy, and praise. Shall a sphere, in those "heavens which are the works of his hands," refuse its music to the Saviour, or withhold to swell the triumph of his salvation over the earth whose "foundations he has laid?" Again, —and far sweeter, and more majestic than that natal peal which floated above our new created world,—let the morning stars sing together, and the sons of God shout for joy!

4. This Creator-Saviour must have the direction of all mundane affairs. He knoweth the way that we take. He telleth our wanderings. He seeth of what we have need. He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He is able to succour us when we are tempted. Death is a part of his blessed administration. By it he comes again to each departing soul of his people. Neither in life nor death can we stray out of his dominion or beyond his care. To the verge of that earth whose foundations he has laid,—to the bend of those heavens which are the works of his hands,—how safe are his disciples! This is your triple security, ye who put your trust in this great God your Saviour! All things are for your sakes! All things work together for your good! All things are yours! The mountains shall depart! The heavens shall shrivel like a burning scroll! You shall never be moved! In the same manner he commands all the great events of time. They do not disappoint him. They present no deviousness to his eye, no difficulty to his progress. He doth "march through the land!" He shall "inherit all nations!" "He shall not fail nor be discouraged until he hath set judgment in the earth!" "The pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hands!" And when his cause is won, and his church is perfected, then shall his hand lay aside this earth and these heavens, as easily as a tissue which is folded up, unfit for future defence and ornament!

5. An immutability most tender and amiable is opposed

by this subject to all our fluctuating circumstances. Who has never found occasion of complaint against human fickleness? Who has never known a mortifying coldness where his heart had lavished all its store of love? Who has never experienced sudden and unaccountable estrangement? O, then, to take these words with us, and looking up to him who loves unto the end, what a relief our wrung soul finds as it cries, "*Thou art the same!*" Bereavement is one of the heaviest portions of our lot. We cannot have travelled far in this uncertain life without many a blank in our affections, many a disseverment of our ties. This saddens and embitters every period of our existence; "lover and friend are put far from us." But it throws a deeper shade over the periods which are more mature. Then our bosom seeks not new fellowships, but more acutely than ever laments the old. What a havoc has been dealt around! What sepulchres lie along our path! O, then, to speak this assurance, and in it to feel that nothing is lost while this is left, "*Thou remainest!*" Age brings with it decay and infirmity, misgiving and irresoluteness, slight and inattention, physical depressions and mournful reviews. Sense has failed in its varied gratifications, and the heart is smitten with a desolateness. O, then, to turn from all beside, to clasp our feeble hands, to raise our dimming eyes, and with our tremulous accents to exclaim, "*Thy years shall not fail!*" How sweet are these supports! What a Saviour is ours! How he invites our confidence! "If it were not so, I would have told you." How he strengthens our courage! "Because I live, ye shall live also." Heaven and earth shall pass away,—He will bid them pass! but his word shall not pass away. "Ask now a sign in the height or in the depth." That height, that depth, are transient, fleeting, perishable things, in comparison with his immutability!

6. All the works of Christ do not look to a termination. The earth and the heavens are but inferior things. They

are unconscious and unintelligent of any principle which they promote. They are but a scaffolding for a spiritual erection. They perish in the using. They will be speedily superseded. But those great truths and claims which have long been contested on this stage shall not sink with it. All these things that our senses perceive shall be dissolved. They are reserved unto fire. But whatever of divine righteousness and grace they have subserved shall emerge from their wreck and triumph over their ruin. These have an eternal vitality in them, they are glorious essences, indestructible spiritualities, they are "things which cannot be shaken, but must remain." Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath, for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old as a garment, and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished."

7. Let not a change of habitation trouble us. Our Maker and Saviour will not leave us without appropriate dwelling. Our first resting-place of existence has been on this planet. It is a lovely habitation, and it may boast in the canopying sky a still more lovely roof. Nothing can so well befit our present stage of being. Merely for the sake of change we "would not be unclothed." There are around us numberless means of enjoyment! We are filled with as numberless capacities of enjoyment! What gifts are there scattered for us to gather! What tastes are there implanted for us to refine! Fair is the spectacle of Nature! Cliffs and mountains, lakes and groves, of this nether world, we are not weary of beholding you! Sun, moon, and constellations, sorrow is turned into joy and age into youth while ye fill our gaze! But we feel that even ye are too gross for the spirit made perfect,—that when our vile body is fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body, we shall need lovelier scenes and brighter luminaries than any ye afford! Farewell! We await

with calm expectation, we hail with desire, your departure and your change! We feel that ye have been as a vesture for us, we have thanked him who hath so clothed us, but now be ye folded up! "We shall be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven!" A sun is there which shall no more go down! Stars are there which shall shine for ever and ever! "We, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Lastly, We cannot fail to admire the *system* of Divine revelation. "Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world." If the glories of the Creator are merged in those of the Saviour,—if he has magnified his word above all his name, he that is our God is the God of salvation. It is a development of one plan, it is the going forth of "one Lord Jesus Christ." All transpires as was determined at the first. The heavens and the earth complete a destined course. All stand up in perfect symmetry and synthesis. It is a glorious structure,—holy as a temple, polished as a palace. He intended by the spreading abroad of this firmament and the rolling forth of this globe that which he shall have realised when he takes them as a vesture and folds them up. He saw the end from the beginning. In the travail of his soul he is satisfied. And sitting upon the throne, and thence discerning the last end of creation and the perfect consummation of redemption, he shall declare, "It is done!"

SERMON XI.

THE DOCTRINE AND DAUNTLESSNESS OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING.*

1 Cor. i. 23.

But we preach Christ crucified.

From these words certain facts may be elicited and certain principles may be deduced. The process need not be worked out with any difficult effort: the facts and the principles are suggested to us, and laid open before us. The following points may be affirmed.

1. That whatever was characteristic in Apostolic preaching, whatever gave it originality, was connected with the death of Christ. They did not incessantly repeat that He had died. Their range was large. Their aspiration was lofty. How diversified their illustration! How redoubled their argument! How exploring their research! But their theme, their vocation, their mission, was distinct from that of all other great teachers and moralists,—They were witnesses of the death of Christ,

* This Sermon was preached at the Anniversary, (July 4, 1844,) of Cheshunt College, founded by the late Right Honourable Countess of Huntingdon. An urgent request was made to the Author, that it might be printed: he declined to publish it separately, but promised to give it its present form. It is impossible for him to refer to the occasion of its delivery, and not to glow with gratitude at the most fraternal welcome and kindness he then received from the Tutors of the College: the Rev. John Harris, D.D., the Rev. Philip Smith, A.M., and the Rev. Joseph Sortain, A.B. Greatly may their noble labours be succeeded! Long may their useful lives be spared!

they were promulgators of the death of Christ, they were expounders of the death of Christ,—they raised the whole scheme and system of their announcements, instructions, appeals,—the blessings which they published, the hopes which they declared,—upon the death of Christ. Far as they travelled, whatever the nations they visited, this was their paramount testimony and exhibition. Nothing could divert their purpose or modify their theme. We are not required to suppose that they were indifferent to the charms of nature and the attractions of art. They would not have wandered through Tempè without delight nor have stood in Athens without admiration. But they could afford only the passing glance. While they averted not their face from the scene of beauty and the marvel of taste, they did not stedfastly set it upon them. They "determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and him crucified." This, in their esteem, was the truth of truth,—the model truth, the centrical truth, the foundation truth. Some statements they may have withheld, but this was never withheld: some sentiments they may have cursorily touched, but this was never cursorily touched: some positions they may have reserved, but this was never reserved. They presented it with such vividness, that it was not only seen by the peoples, most distant from the actual theatre of the event, as in the power of description and the force of representation,—as pictured to them in spectacle, and action,—those peoples who had not heard of Calvary until now, beheld the awful wonder of Messiah's death as localised in their countries, as perpetrated to their senses,—"before *their eyes* Jesus Christ was *evidently set forth*, crucified *among them*."

2. We may readily infer from these words, that they only are good ministers of Jesus Christ, true successors of the Apostles so far as they left any part of their office incomplete, who adhere to the same unalterable resolve. They adopt that class and kind of preaching which ob-

tained in the beginning of the gospel. They feel deep horror of innovation and defection. The primitive rule and sanction suffice for them. They find in it no dearth, no restriction, with all its exclusiveness. Girded with this truth, clothed with this salvation, they are wrapped in the only mantle which they covet. They affect not noisy and obtrusive reiterations. They have no favourite, systematic, words. But they preach Christ crucified: they signalise him, in this peculiarity of his death, the capital figure of their entire averments to the world,—fixing every eye on him, drawing every ear to him,—him, the source of all spiritual good,—him, the basis of all spiritual hope,—him, the authority of all spiritual law,—him, the life of all spiritual motive,—him, the savour of all spiritual delight. Apostles have ceased, but not their doctrine,—their voice still is heard,—their part is still supported,—We preach Christ Crucified.

3. A deduction from these words yet remains. This must be the invariable subject of the Christian Ministry, whatever may be the direction of the public mind and the spirit of the passing age. When the Apostles made this avowal, it was most adverse to the general taste. It was in extremest dissonance with the fashions of thinking and feeling then entertained. The philosophy of other lands was arrogant and scornful: the fanaticism of their own was fierce and doting. The prejudices of both could find some support. The Jew had been taught reverence for his holy antiquity of race, sacrifice and prediction. He had reckoned up the long calendar of judges and kings: of priests and prophets. He wanted portents as they shone forth of old. He "desired a sign." His sympathy was rather with them who "subdued kingdoms, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight." He might even extend some share of that sympathy to them who had endured persecution for the sake of Israel's people

and God,—them who "were stoned, who were sawn asunder, who were slain with the sword." But all his associations were revolted at the religion of one who "had hanged on a tree!" The Gentile made all good to depend upon certain abstract speculations, reasoning upon them through certain categories, and these were his boast. He lived in his intellectual romance. He bore away in his vision above the multitude which he hated and oppressed. "The Greek sought after wisdom." How could he couple his idea of it with a death of ignominy, and that among a people whom he reputed barbarian! But see the rigid practice of these first Christian preachers. No doubt they felt the embarrassment. They were always in conflict with the current dispositions and usages of their generation. They could not have fallen upon more evil times, they could not have encountered more unpropitious circumstances. They were met by the flood-tide. Every influence, every accident, crossed them. Did they attempt compliance with the universal prejudice? Did they offer to accommodate the mortifying matter of their message? The thought is not breathed. "*But*," notwithstanding this contempt and disdain of what we preach,—"we preach Christ Crucified." They seem to say: We know nothing of any particular epoch more than of another. We know nothing of any particular condition and turn of popular opinion and enquiry. We care not for these mutations. They have always been as diversified as they are fickle. Sect will rise after sect. Theory will follow upon theory. But though all change we cannot change. We are under an inviolable vow. We are committed to an irrevocable proclamation. We are shut up to this faith. It is a faith for all times whatever the revolutions which they unfold. We foresee the perversities with which they who follow after us must contend; how men will not endure sound doctrine! how they will turn aside into vain janglings. But let our successors be

unmoved. Each period will plead its manners and predilections. It will ask for such an adaptation of Christianity to it, as the present now demands. Let not the heralds of the Cross yield to the clamour. All concession is to be refused. The Church to the last shall only bear to hear, the Ministry to the last shall only glory to preach, Christ Crucified!

Now we cannot suppose that, though there was implicit obedience in this conduct of the apostles, their course was unintelligent. It was not a blind, unreasoning, pertinacity. They understood the grounds on which they proceeded. They preached this event because assured of its surpassing interest, its true glory. Unless the divine honour had been involved in its issue, they knew that they should never have been appointed to make it their report. Unless the salvation of man had been its intent, they knew that they should never have been commissioned to reveal it as good news and glad tidings. Necessity was laid upon them: but it was of that moral order which left them without alternative: they could not but speak the things which they had seen and heard.

Let us now, then, endeavour to

I. Ascertain what they preached.

The occurrence that a man, known by the proper name of Jesus, had died, is not strange, nor can be important, detached from all beside. A decease at Jerusalem could not be singular, as the tombs in the valley of Jehoshaphat would show. Crucifixion was no uncommon form of death, as Golgotha, the place of skulls, could prove.

We may here premise that the death and crucifixion of Christ are constantly taken out of the range of mere mortal events. Men inflicted it, they were conscious of their motive, they were accountable for their deed. The traitor had "the greater sin." The murderers executed their purpose "with wicked hands." But an infinite

power was at work. They knew not what they did. "For had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." An infinite wisdom prevailed: "He was delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God." Put the human agents aside. Behold in it God alone. Wisely consider of his doing. "It pleased the Lord to bruise him: He hath put him to grief."

We pause not to declare His eternal Sonship and essential Divinity. It were superfluous to tell of his "Divine Power," his "Majesty," his "own glory," all his attributes and claims which do away every construction of "robbery in making himself equal with God."

We pause not to declare his taintless purity as the God-Man. The seraphim long since acclaimed Him as the thrice holy Jehovah, the King, the Lord of hosts. "These things said Esaias when he saw his glory, and spake of him." In his humanity we see that Holy One and Just. Deity was well pleased in him. Who convinced him of sin? Mysterious is, consequently, the Position of Christ as Crucified, "Remember, I pray thee, whoever perished, being innocent, or where were the righteous cut off?" * "God loved Him before the foundation of the world." "The only begotten Son was in the bosom of the Father." "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all." Why should the Man, Christ Jesus, be crucified! He was "holy harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." It is a fearful anomaly: considered of itself, it is an egregious injustice, it is a casting down of the throne of holiness. He who had said, "This is my beloved Son," forsakes Him! "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God," is "numbered with the transgressors!"

But that position was most holy. He entered it, saying, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Divine complacency

* Job. iv. 7.

never rose so high as when he stood in that position. "My Elect, in whom my soul delighteth." "Therefore," the Redeemer exclaimed, "My Father loveth me, because I lay down my life." If, while he thus continued in this position, there seemed to shoot out flashes of wrath against him,—if the emblems of punitive righteousness stood up before him,—the Cup, the Sword, the Darkness, the difficulty can only be relatively explained.

So was he predicted. He was to be cut off: to pour out his soul unto death: the assembly of the wicked was to enclose him: they should pierce his hands and his feet.

So was he prominently manifested after that he had died. No extenuation was sought. The history of the transaction was minutely precise. The preaching of it was laboriously full.

As Martyrdom, it is not justified by rejoicing, by fearlessness, by triumph: by the dint of that mood, by that greatest human victory.

As Example, it is not vindicated by comparison, by applicability, by appropriateness: the claim and the ground of his death are for ever distinct and peculiar. They admit not of imitation.

As evidence, it is not borne out, it cannot stand forth, but would rather appear the disgrace and disaster of his cause than its confirmation.

So in another place of this Epistle, Paul "declares the gospel." * He recapitulates what he had "delivered first of all,"—in chief,—as its rudiments. It is not his argument for the truth of the gospel, but his definition of it,—"how that Christ died for our sins." If this be not its purport, where is "the declaration," where is it defined?

What was that mysterious Position in which he stands? It was substitutionary. He died for sin. Then in some

* 1 Cor. xv. 1.

sense sin was imputed to him, and charged upon him. He voluntarily submitted to its liabilities. He died, the just for the unjust. He stood in accidental connection with sin, but in necessary estrangement from it. "He was made sin for us, who knew no sin." "And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin." To "redeem us from the curse of the law, he became a curse for us." "The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." "His soul was made an offering for sin." "He was delivered for our offences."

All these views tend to stamp on this crucified death the character of a sacrifice. It was an offering for sin. It was an offering unto God. We read much of such sacrificial action in the Old Testament. In the New Testament we mark its application. Prophecy occupies a middle place between the type and the accomplishment. It detaches the meaning of the type from itself, and carries it forward to some great Personage or Event in whom, in which, it may be absorbed. Then inspired record comes to our aid, and we identify the Christ who was to be crucified. A perfect analogy is traced between the emblematic rites and this oblation. Priests are seen ministering, the victims bleed, the altars smoke. But this is only allusive. In him are these ideas only to be found. There never was proper Priest, victim, altar, but himself. He is not called after them: they are made conformable to him. So we discover in his death an Atonement, an expiation, a satisfaction, a propitiation, a reconciliation, a ransom, a redemption! It can cleanse, purge, purify, and sanctify too!

The Doctrine of the Cross is God's method of pardoning sin, and of restoring the sinner. It is no reluctant yielding, no purchased unwillingness, but the spontaneousness, the good pleasure, of an infinite placability. It implies no change in the Divine mind, but it is the simple evolution of its counsel and love. It can suppose no ap-

peasement of such anger and wrath as our frail spirits know. God was in Christ. Who can turn him? Fury is not in him.—But sin had entered our world, disturbing our relations, marring our duties; and by "breaking the law we dishonoured God." It must be condemned. It must be put away. It was a foul infraction, a leprous taint. However man may be treated, this must be resented. However man may be pardoned, the Divine character must be cleared of all indifference towards sin, and of all connivance at it. The supremacy of law must be upholden. The end of creation must be secured. The atonement by Christ crucified meets each exigence and removes each difficulty. God is exalted, and declares his rectitude in the remission of sin. Christ is the end of the law, and hath magnified it and made it honourable. The purposes of the universe are maintained, and it "became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The scheme is consistent and efficacious: it provides for every wrong and every woe: for every divine honour and every human interest: for the redress of heaven and the salvation of earth. The perfections of God, like an ample sphere of light, environ the cross. Justice there exacts its claims, Holiness displays its beauties, Truth maintains its terms, Mercy "overflows and passes over." That cross, with all the light which is full of glory, beams only the more gently toward sinful man. It is his guide and defence and stay. "The preaching of it is to them who perish foolishness, but to them that are saved, it is the power of God." To preach Christ crucified is, then, to show unto men the way of salvation.

But Atonement does not include the whole of salvation, neither does it exhaust the Apostolic theme. We know that there is rife the doctrine which converts Christ crucified rather into our crucifixion than his. It is the idea of

this doctrine that the cross is not so much the means of atonement, as the motive and pattern of our mortification; that in preaching it, we preach humility and self-denial. But in flinging from us this vile distortion of the truth, let us not hurry to the opposite extreme. We preach Christ crucified as not only the foundation, exclusive and unmixed, of the sinner's pardon and justification, but as the pledge and principle of his spiritual regeneration. Before that Jesus had "made peace by the blood of his cross," he in affecting anticipation of his death had enjoined on every disciple, "let him take up his cross and follow me." Sin, self, and earth, feel that the purport of this crucifixion of the Son of God is most holy. When it is understood and received, these three things yield before it. They are pictured as dying upon the cross: they are evils which it was intended to destroy. We are brought into sympathy with it. We know the fellowship of these sufferings, we are made conformable unto this death. We denounce these evils for crucifixion. We cry out, Crucify them, crucify them! Is it *sin?* Crucify it, crucify it! "Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with Christ, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin." Is it *self?* Crucify it, crucify it! "I am crucified with Christ." "They that are Christ's, have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Is it *earth?* Crucify it, crucify it! "By which the world is crucified unto me and I unto the world." Christ crucified is thus in us, our soul learns some of the travail of his soul, we die unto sin, we arm ourselves with the same mind, the mysterious stigmata imprint themselves upon our inner man, we are a living sacrifice, we are dead with Christ! O the power of the Cross to draw us to it, and to assimilate us to itself.

It is plain, then, that the phrase, "Christ crucified," is not, according to the dream of some, general, as though it was put to denote the mission of Christ at large. No

where is it said that his doctrine saves, that his miracle saves, that his example saves, that the living action saves. The uniform tenour of Scripture is, that his potency and virtue to save from guilt and from depravity are in his death. Our faith is in his blood, we are washed from our sins in his own blood, we are by our earliest vow baptised unto his death, we show forth in the mystic banquet his death till he come! There is in this style an undeviating precision, an unbending use. In imitation of it, in honour of it, we preach Christ crucified.

Such was the course of the Apostles. They stood true to their errand. They turned not to the right hand nor to the left. They now declare their irrevocable resolve.

We proceed, then, to show that this was not easy, not apparently expedient: that it supposed perpetual conflict:—

II. Their invariable and perpetual inculcation of this doctrine is marked as difficult and as constantly opposed.

"*But* we preach Christ crucified." They seem to say: It is a branded tale. It is an obnoxious message. No state of the world could be so discouraging to our attempt. Where can we find favour? Is it among the bowers of the East? or among its courts and kings? Is it in the metropolis of the world, with its insolence of state and its sternness of power? with its spoils of conquered nations? with its pantheon of gods? Is it in the regions of classic lore and elegance? Athens with its rock of crowded temple and sculpture? its portico, lycæum, and grove? Is it in the marts of commercial luxury? Corinth, Alexandreia, with their rich barks and freights? Is it in the seats of superstition? Memphis with its sepulchral idolatries, and Ephesus with its gorgeous piles? Is it in the noblest seas, their islands and their shores? The Ægean with its cyclades, the Bosphorus with its continents? We are despised of all, down-trodden of all. We obtain

not hearing, we find not foot-hold. One scowl defies us. One shout of scorn pursues us. We find no prepossession, in civilised or uncivilised, on which to graft our doctrine. Thinking of ourselves, if it rested with ourselves, it were a hopeless cause. We are condemned at once. Do we declaim? "What will this babbler say?" Do we reason? "Thou art beside thyself: much learning doth make thee mad." "We are made as the filth of the earth, and are the offscouring of all things unto this day." We know how this might be prevented: how we might acquire power and fame. A little bending on our part, concession to opinion, accommodation to taste,—a trifling intermixture of "the Jew's religion,"—an inconsiderable infusion of the Gentile's philosophy,—is all that is wanted to propitiate mankind. "No, not for an hour!" We will not blench a jot! "But,"—in spite of all dislike and resistance—"we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, and unto the Greeks, foolishness; but unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

Our present circumstances are not entirely unlike those of the Apostles. The state of the public mind is often pleaded against the fixedness of Christianity. The case is thus proposed. No one form of instruction can meet that which is so restless and variable. Society is ever passing through changes and climacterics. Man is seen in constant transitions. Great impulses and movements are at work wherever there is a civilization and a literature. Besides, the mind of nations is most diversified. Pass a frontier,—the people are unlike all you have left behind you. A new class of intellectual phænomena addresses you. Every thing seems to enter a new form and combination. There is the Asiatic mind, the American mind, and, if we may not add the European mind, it is only because that great geographical division comprehends so many families of mind. The objection

still proceeds. You must now deal with all these mental varieties, in their constant flux and caprice as well as in their original elements. Where can you find a universal religion? Can you pretend that it is to be found in Christianity? Christianity, according to your own showing, is what it was the first hour of its declaration. It is one and the same. You insert its glory in this unbending claim. How can it, consequently, adjust itself to the every posture of human intellect? How can it keep pace with the every progression of human society? The rock may divide the waves when *they* overtake it; but, immoveable itself, what is its power when those waves are beating in the farther sea?

Now in these allegations there is much that is true, but far more that is false.

It is true, that Christianity is rigidly, gloriously, complete. Addition to it would invalidate it. The curse is upon the attempt. Nothing more can be put into it but as it consists in Scripture or in the mind of God. We see in this incapability of emendation the plainest sign and surest proof of its excellence: it is final because it cannot be improved. But it does not follow that there is not such a strength and fulness in it as that it shall move in advance of all the triumphs of mind, that it shall well up and send forth influences new to all but itself, that it shall show on every unexpected trial of it yet hidden powers, that it shall have been conceived in the spirit which is prophetic of the deepest future, that it shall illustrate its fastest principles in the freest applications. Of new mathematical axioms and of new mechanical powers we shall be very sceptical,—just as we are jealous of new discoveries in Christianity,—but while these are changeless and immultiplicable,—who can restrict their use and service, the theatres which they shall signalise and the achievements which they shall secure? The laws of triangles, conic sections,

circles, cannot be altered: it is their perfection. The laws of the lever, the inclined plane, of expansive gasses, cannot be increased: it is their efficiency. But do we limit their several determinations? The triangle is the same in its laws, wherever drawn or however conceived: but do we lose sight of these when by it we measure the surface of some mighty realm? The lever is the same in its principles, however modeled and wherever seen: but do we forget these when the rudder guides amidst the billows and gulphs some majestic bark?

And this is the distinction of the Gospel. It foreknows the whole history of man. Let his varieties, let his fluctuations, be what they may, it has provided for them. It can be surprised into no ignorance. It can be betrayed into no failure. No emergence can perplex it. No shock can move it. It is the same in *every* age, yet might it have been revealed simply for *that* age. It is the one inheritance of *all* generations, yet might it have been bequeathed for *each*. It has eternal identity and universal adaptation!

It may be, indeed, questioned whether man is thus different in his various periods. With all his liberty and all his progress, he cannot expatiate but within certain bounds. He has a nature, though peculiar, like other existences; and he cannot pass beyond it. He travels as frequently in a cycle as on the foreward. He may be now seen, not as seen the last, but as he was seen in some earlier stage of his history. Like the revolutions of his planet, his movements often but restore him to some ancient position. Prepared for his wants and yearnings, Christianity liveth and abideth for ever! It regards not man in his classes or in his nations, but in himself. This gives to it its high qualification. It penetrates man to his intimacies and depths,—every man: it is nothing to it, therefore, that some arbitrary views of man occasionally present themselves. They are all redu-

cible to his primary elements of character. Like the fitful starts of the elemental system, they fall under its proper laws. Man is never so intellectually and morally eccentric as to falsify the estimate, and to defeat the efficacy, of the Gospel!

We may not conceal it from ourselves that many do, in our times, lay to the charge of "preaching Christ crucified," a certain obsoleteness and failure. They quote existing opinion and taste. They tell us that the exigences of the age are not met by it. They plead for a style of instruction and appeal more consonant to what man is now.

In the description of this Age the objectors are by no means agreed. Be its type what it may, we only see in it the stronger reason for the declaration of the Christian doctrine. We may take up objection after objection, and find one answer for all.

This, we are informed, is a *mechanical* and *calculating* age. Science stoops from its high complacency, its lofty vision,—plods in manufacture and artisanship; confines that ken, which was wont to expatiate among the stars, to narrow measurements and sordid gains; tortures that spirit of discovery, which found out worlds, for ratios of weight and speed in the humblest instruments. Simple, coarse, utilitarianism is all its study and concern. If this be true, surely there is needed something to call back man to thought and meditation. He is in want of a monitor and a remembrancer that he is not merely animal and earthly, that this life is but the beginning of days to him, that the secular advantages which can now be attained are poor and may be too dearly bought, that his immortality should be his proper care and business, that he must soon cease to have any part in things which he now proves to be uncertain and fleeting,—things which not only are doomed to perish, but which even perish in the using. Oh, it is the Cross which alone can shame this low cupidity, throw contempt over these competitions for wealth, beggar

this passing scene, convince man of the true good and glory, urge him to lay hold on eternal life. The spiritual influence of the Atonement mocks at the bustle, stir, and warfare of such poor struggles and such base passions,—deals a double death, and that of its own crucifixion, upon the worldling and the world,—teaches us to count all things as loss, as dung, in comparison with it,—puts forth all its power to destroy our selfishness,—by first enlarging the heart, enlarges all beside,—and ever points to the Cross, its own means and monument, as the way-mark to guide and draw us from this mean earth to heaven.

But others differently draw the present time. They deem that these cold, repulsive, features have passed away from the social system, if ever they were imprinted upon it. According to their reading of the age, it is *eagerly mental.* Man stands in his proudest bent. All his high cravings are clamorously awake. He looks more within. He cherishes the inner life and power. He yearns for happiness which he knows not to define. He wants something that can kindle admiration, inspire confidence, and win love. And there are potent spirits, magicians of the soul, sleeplessly at work to lay open, as well as to rouse up, this interior conflict. With all their spells they cannot lay what they have raised, nor rule what they have evoked. They can make us miserable, without being able to explain the cause or to apply the relief. Now this dearth, this void, this panting of the soul does Christianity elicit. It makes us sorry that it may make us glad. It causes us to feel that we "have spent money for that which is not bread, and our labour for that which satisfieth not." It then provides that we shall "eat that which is good and that our soul shall delight itself in fatness." And this it accomplishes,—first, by putting man's suspense as to his safety at rest, and secondly, by putting man's desire as to his self transcen-

dence into action. Oh, it is the Cross which at the same time humbles and exalts! Would you see man great? man in his earnestness? man in his power? more spirit than flesh? more immortal than terrestrial? This can only be realised by certain processes. You *must restore him to what he was.* He can only be magnified in his own proper nature. That is now lost and wrecked. It is the Cross which secures his regeneration, and he puts on "the man," which is only "new" in reference to his fall, but is truly that man which is original and first.—You must *give him mental quiet.* He is disturbed in all noble qualities when his spirit is agonised by fears. Calm is the source and sign of strength. It is the Cross which reconciles and pacifies the troubled conscience. When our faith beholds it, we revive, we rejoice, we have boldness, we assure our hearts, our hearts condemn us not.—You must *supply to him enlarged views and sentiments.* His soul only knows outgrowth when thus it is abundantly stored. In these things is the life of the spirit. It is the Cross which, with matchless power, unfolds the mind. When it excites our thoughts towards God in his moral perfections, when it inspires in us such jealousy of his honour that we would not be saved by its compromise, when it empowers us to give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness,—these thoughts are so unearthly, there is such elevation, such power in them,—that they dilate the soul to its deepest capacity, and invest it with its highest dignity. — You must *teach him self-conquest and self-government.* This is the secret of inward might. Where these dwell not, there is but the slave. It is the Cross which demands of us this subjection of our pride, our arrogance, our sensuality. It enthrones in us a sanctified will. It bids us forth to a perpetual victory over our sinful inclinations.—You must *exhibit before him models of renown and excellence.* His mind thus acquires rich ideas and perceptions,

towering imaginations and aims. It is the Cross which exclusively shows us God in his awful amiableness, as the example whom we are to follow, to be perfect as he is perfect, to be holy for he is holy. As Christ was, in human virtues, so must we be in the world. We are compassed about with a great cloud of witnesses.—You must *affect him with all congenial motives.* Satisfy his capacity and desire for happiness. Draw out his reason and his sensibility. Take hold of the master-springs of action. Until he be ruled by intelligent and moral principle, he is no better, he is only more wretched, than the brute. It is the Cross, with an œconomy of motives all its own, which so stimulates, so amazes, so melts, so constrains, so pierces, so binds, the human soul, that each exercise, in the variety and agreement of its inward promptings, finds the sweetest facility and the purest freedom.—You must *fill him with a sincere philanthropy.* Man is little when he regards but himself, his order, his caste. His nature has not broken forth until he has embraced his kind. The fountain is sealed which was made to flow. Whence ever originated such a love of all men? It is the Cross which alone teaches it and inspires it. It is one benevolence. It communicates its benevolence to its disciples. And He who bled there speaks thus to his Father,—we hear and would obey: "As thou, Father, hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world." You must *arouse him with incentives drawn from a future life.* What can throw this world into the shade, and bring out the solemnities of the world to come? It is the Cross which sounds immortality through the soul, and lets in upon it the visions of an imperishable glory.

And we are incessantly reminded of that spirit of opposition, of "much contention," in which we are compelled to preach Christ crucified. We must persevere

against protest and disclaimer: warning and sneer. "But,"—we care not for the outcry, we are not diverted from our purpose. We have only to enumerate some of those maxims, which are heard among us, to prove how firmly our vow ought to be maintained.

It is contended that the doctrine of the atonement requires, of all Christian principles, to be taught in the most veiled and guarded manner. It is to be intimated and shadowed, and not fully declared. It must be shrouded in reserve. Let it be conveyed in broken utterances and ænigmatic terms. Keep back the integral discovery. Restrain the perfect light. "*But* we *preach* Christ crucified."

It is urged that the atonement is only properly brought before the notice of men by figurative representation. Let there be scenic device. Crowd a dramatic show. Awaken imagination. Rivet sense. Work upon the mind by outward impressions of sign and art. "*But* we *preach* Christ crucified."

It is argued that particular applications, of material substances, can alone impart the virtues of the atonement. These must be the mysterious channels by which they are communicated to the human spirit. Their validity depends upon certain human acts. As benediction is spoken or withheld, as hand is outstretched or retracted, is the efficacy or the impotency of these ministrations. They are employed as very charms. Without any exercise of the understanding, they affect the spiritual state and life. "*But* we *preach* Christ crucified."

It is pleaded that the renovation of mankind depends upon another view of Christ. He shall convert the nations by a different manifestation. It is in vain to hope for the promised and the predicted result until there shall be that epiphany and second coming. It ought now to be made most prominent in all Christian worship and doc-

trine. It is the exclusive means of stirring the slumbering church and of testifying against the unbelieving world. "*But* we preach Christ *crucified.*"

It is declared that the first business that ought to engage us, if we seek the good and melioration of the species, is to raise the masses from their ignorance and abasement: to elevate them educationally, to advance them politically. Let us form them for moral habits, let us train them to social virtues. Be this your first attempt. They have not now the capacity of religion. All ulterior attempts are at present wasted upon them. The spear of truth rebounds. "But *we* preach *Christ* crucified."

It is premised that some great evil exists in the community, some vice which eats into its vitals. It brutifies the mind. It corrupts all the domestic affections. It spreads like a blight over all the public morals. Useless must be each endeavour to propagate the best opinions until this plague be stayed. First root it out, and then you may commence other efforts. Lift man to self-respect, and then address him with your principles. "But *we* preach Christ crucified."

It is set forth that a Community, a Corporate Power, a Capitular Executive, subsists on earth, with the keys of pardon and absolution; that we ought not to look to the Saviour of this Body, but to this Body as the Saviour; that this is the ark of salvation; that this is the reservoir of all spiritual aids and blessings; that it possesses independent authority and jurisdiction; that it should be proclaimed for refuge; that in it is only safety. "*But* we preach *Christ crucified.*"

It is maintained that, though the blessings of Christianity stand in some connection with the death of its Founder, the medium of connection is by no means clear; that substitution cannot be supposed; that sacrifice can be by no means intended; that most fanatical are they who lay any stress upon vicarious, piacular, quali-

ties as the essentials of this death, which is only a general and figurative phrase. "*But* we preach *Christ crucified.*"

It is averred that the death of Christ is but an imperfect event in itself; that it is not self-determined; that it is a mere preliminary; that as he must rise, so must he die, but that he need only die in order that he might rise; that his death has no place nor part separate from that which follows; that it is only a stage to something else. "*But* we preach *Christ crucified.*"

It is insinuated that the ordinance of preaching is too extensively favoured, that it is disproportionately indulged. We are told of the house of prayer, that devotional acts should be the chief occupation of the public and social hours of the sabbath, that the value of human exhortation is very trivial, that it is but the impression of the mortal's opinion, that little obligation and feeble sanction can attach to it. "*But* we *preach* Christ crucified."

It is denounced against all who may thus determine, if they follow not a particular system, that they have trespassed upon an awful right, as though their hands touched sacrilegiously the ark, as though they offered strange fire. They are required to show the genealogy of their priesthood. Infinite forbearance is urged, though not pleaded, to account for their impunity,—that fire comes not forth to consume them, that the earth does not open and swallow them up. We derive no such right, we seek no such title, from this source of a fabulous antiquity: we are restrained by no such fear. "*But we* preach Christ crucified."

And let it not be supposed that in this adherence we regard the doctrine which we preach otherwise than adapted and consecrated for its end. We would not hope to work a charm or to bind a spell. We "affirm these things constantly" because we feel their saving efficacy. We resist every opposition to them, every succedaneum

for them, every dilution of them, because of their verified excellence and tried power. We, therefore, will not give way to those who would corrupt them. Our times have their signs and their lessons. These teach and warn us against the slightest departures from the faith. In degrees supposed the unimportant, they enjoin us to be unyielding. The strength of Christianity is in its perfect, unaltered, self: in its incapability of change. We preach it to all. Wonders follow. To the wise and the unwise, when they believe, it is alike availing. The distant tribes of idolatry have heard it, and have thrown their idols away. God thus honours his truth and his messengers. "He hath showed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen." Where has the preaching of the Cross been utterly foiled? Where has no glad and holy effect ensued? In every age, among every people, it has "drawn all men," men of all conditions, though not in their universal numbers, unto Him who died upon it. It is because it can do immediately those very things, until the accomplishment of which these parties desire that it may be withheld and its inculcation may be suspended, that we hold thus strenuously to it. It is because it provides the antidote to those very things, those specious evils, which are set up in opposition to it or in independence of it, that we thus contend earnestly for it. We know no other lever to raise society but this. We know no other security for the stability of science and the permanency of learning but this. We know no other guide for the progression of the human mind but this. We know no other incentive to a widely diffusing civilization but this. We would, therefore, engrave it on the ages. We would bind it to all mortal future, issue, destiny. This it is which blesses man in both lives, saves him for both worlds, gives him heavenly places here and invests him with the possession of that whole heaven

hereafter. It is then, be it understood, with reasoning purpose, with advised conviction, with deliberated avowal, that we preach Christ crucified!

And deeply does it grieve us when we hear the insinuation that there is no *power* in our ministry, that the modern pulpit is an engine of feeble influence, that there is generally felt a need for something else. We cannot for an instant disestablish preaching from its divine authority. We cannot, upon any supposition, desire for it another theme. Here is fitness and here is force. The office is clear. The theme is divinely great. The want of power can only be charged upon ourselves. And what interest, intentness, intensity, should kindle within us! If we believe, how should we speak! Ours should be tongues of fire! Ours should be words of flame! The subject of our ministry should take such entire possession of us, that zeal and faith and love should be the faintest terms to describe the wrought temperament of our soul. Preaching Christ crucified, in his atonement and its bearing,—what power inufsed itself into those great men who hurled from his high place the Son of Perdition. They grasped none other might than this. It made them strong. It gave them victory. They only plied the secret of far earlier triumphs. It was this which exposed the dreams, silenced the oracles, overturned the altars, of Pagan Greece and Rome with all their gods. Almost within our times, this word of the Cross fanned the sleeping embers of piety, and smote formalism and error with such a blow that they seemed to die. But the deadly wound, alas, is not healed. These foes revive. The combat must be renewed. We are summoned to the field. We must give them battle. There is no sword like this. Instead of distrusting it, we must only put greater confidence in it. We must wield it more resolutely. We must strike with it more skilfully. It must not rest. And if we thus preach, and if all our soul be in our preaching, men shall again say, What a

word is this! Again shall it come in power! Simple statement, deep feeling, earnest appeal, are all that is required of us; the Holy Ghost will bless his own truth and succeed his own instrumentality.

And standing where I do, can I forget the origin of this College, or fail to commemorate the honours of its Foundress? How she left all for Christ? How her coronet was laid down before the Cross? How her high-born state was as nothing in her eyes? How she expended her wealth and last jewellery that the truth of the gospel might be preached? How true she stood to the doctrines of grace? How her energies were devoted to the increase of the Christian ministry? How she bound together all who loved the Saviour, and welcomed them on common grounds? How her venerable age glowed with all the fire of her earlier ardours? How academic learning and training occupied her attention to the last! Here, in these fair domains, we behold the monument of her catholic piety and steadfast evangelism. And you carry out intentions which were broken short. You raise a more elaborate system of instruction. You know that a holy ministry cannot be too learned. You gather on this spot, as your professors, no common men. They need yield to none. Your Faculties are wisely and amply arranged. Your restrictions upon your alumni shackle them to sound doctrine, but to nought beside. Your Institution is daily rising in public esteem. Every auspice gleams around it. Its halls of divinity, literature, and philosophy gather fame. Our Churches, and none more than those of Congregationalism, are your debtors. We bless you out of the house of the Lord!

To You, my beloved Brethren, the Students of this Foundation, suffer me now to offer the assurances of heart-felt esteem and good will. Your privileges are of no common order. There is every means and every motive for high intellectual cultivation. Never can you, after

your term of residence here has expired, enjoy the opportunities of storing knowledge which you now command. It is still more important for you to remember, that you are forming habits now which after life is not likely to forego. The indolent student and the diligent minister, the diligent student and the indolent minister, are seldom found in the same person. But my counsels must not be *miscellaneous*: take *one* for my charge. Preach Christ crucified! Turn not aside from this under the temptation of meeting some question of the day, or some bearing of the public mind. There is much mystic verbiage which some esteem to be of transcendental depth. There is much pantheism which some regard as original and sublime. Your versatility will often be urged to follow after these conceits. You will be told of their amazing influence. They really are nothing. They are the bubbles of the hour. They cannot boast even a novelty. I conjure you care little for them. Yours is not a discretionary theme. It is unchanging. Keep to it. Abide by it. It is one, but it is an infinite one! It is the word of Christ, divinely great and true! Its rigidness can never hamper your thought. Its reiteration can never weary your enquiry. At no point can it restrict you. It is a large place. It is a boundless range. It is a mine of wealth. It is a firmament of power. Whither would ye go from it? It is the unwinding of all great principles! It is the expansion of all glorious thoughts! It is the capacity of all blessed emotions! O Calvary, we turn to thee! Our nature,—a wreck, a chaos, only canst Thou adjust! We have an aching void which only thou canst fill! We have pantings and longings which only thou canst satisfy! Be thou the strength and charm of our inward life! Be thou the earnestness of our deepest interest! Be thou our inspiration, impulsion, divinity, and all! Our tears never relieved us, until thou taughtest us to weep! Our smiles only mocked us, until thou badest

us rejoice! We knew no way of peace, until we found our way to thee! Hope was banished from us, until its dove flew downward from thee upon our heart! All was dormant until thou didst stir, all was dull until thou didst excite, us! Our eyes are still lifted to thee as to the hill from which cometh all our help! Our feet shall stand upon thee, O, high mountain,—and thou shalt make them beautiful while we publish the glad tidings of "Christ crucified!

SERMON XII.

THE PERVERSION OF APOSTOLIC PREACHING.

GAL. v. 11.

THEN IS THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS CEASED.

IT is a tremendous threatening which God has denounced against the untoward, against those who obstinately oppose and contumaciously resist him: "If ye walk contrary unto me, I will walk contrary unto you." The issue of such a collision is instantaneous as it is inevitable. "Who would set the briers and thorns against Him in battle? He would go through them, He would burn them together." "Who hath hardened himself against Him and prospered?" "Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker!" And yet the sinner has his counterplots to the divine purpose, his antagonist movements against the divine agency, furls out his banner of defiance, and would erect his own rebel throne. Vain worm! How easy a prey, how ready a victim, is he to the power he braves, the justice he provokes! He rushes on the bosses of these bucklers but to recoil and perish!

But God oftentimes thwarts and conquers the sinner in benevolence. With the most merciful intentions, he pursues toward him a course of the most unvarying checks and counteractions. He prevents him with goodness. He hides pride from him, but only because pride goeth before destruction. The haughtiness of man He brings low, but simply because grace can only be given to the hum-

ble. He hedges up the way, but entirely because he can thus only show the straitened wanderer the path of life. The devices in a man's heart are many, and, let them have their way, that man is undone: but the counsel of the Lord that shall stand, and it is this counsel, firmly intent upon its grace, which alone can secure salvation. Therefore the language is not more sublime than tender: "He will have mercy: He will abundantly pardon: for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are his ways higher than your ways, and his thoughts than your thoughts." Only can we be happy as our natural judgments are reversed, our natural resolves broken,—only safe but as we make an entire retraction of all we thought and hoped, while we "follow after," and "come into," God's righteousness. Our reasonings, our imaginations, are cast down: God alone must be exalted.

These remarks will find their illustration in the connection and history of the Text.

The Apostle had preached throughout the region of Galatia, as he was wont in all places, the doctrine of the Christ crucified. The doctrine was professedly received. They who embraced it were formed into churches. Those churches were constituted in that belief. Neither individual, nor community, disregarded or denied it. It was warmly admired as well as allowed. But it was not truly understood. Its simplicity and sufficience were not properly appreciated. They added to it. They considered the addition as even needful for salvation. It was not to supersede it, but to enforce it. And this appendage was a divine institute, of venerable antiquity, of holy import, of mystic reference to the very truth of justification by faith in Christ's mediatorial merit. It was the seal of the righteousness by faith to Abraham,—it was of the fathers. Circumcision had not been so much annulled as left to a self-abrogation. Paul had himself practised it. Even now, to prevent odium and to avoid offence, he would

not have, perhaps, utterly condemned it. But in the present instance it was made essential and fundamental to the gospel. It was attached as a condition, it was contributed as a virtue, to the Cross. Without it, that Cross was denounced to be inadequate to its glorious service. Circumcision was exclusively to render it potent for its majestic design. This external rite was enjoined and boasted that it might complete the Cross, thus implying that it was defective,—that it might recommend it, thus presuming that it was unattractive,—that it might extenuate it, thus supposing that it was indefensible. But God accepts not the apologies of his sinful creatures for his conduct and his truth. He brooks not their counsel and aid. He will owe nothing to them. He will explain himself. His revelation claims to be received, not asks to be vindicated: He calls for scholars, not judges; subjects, not patrons;—those who will bend at his feet and not usurp his tribunal. He invites not favour, but mere docility and submission.

Now there are two Attempts or Resolves in constant operation as to the Cross. One is man's, to accommodate it to human liking and taste: the second is God's, to raise human liking and taste to it. These most opposite purposes we proceed to consider.

I. THE AIM OF MAN.

"Then is the offence of the Cross ceased." And in such case, there must be its depreciation. It is brought down from its proper excellency. When such is the predicament, that which no more excites the native enmity of the human heart must be shorn of its strength and disarrayed of its glory. Now it is obvious that this neutralization of its odium is put as a most undesirable effect. It is a surrender, a compromise, which must be deprecated, which is only to be abhorred. It is a reduction to *absurdity*. How must the Cross be altered, contradicted, abused, when it elicits the approval, and lulls the opposition, of

those who can have nothing in common with its real purport, all whose principles and objects it condemns! Who does not see an utter estrangement from its scope and meaning, a palpable counter-working of its influence and use, in any pretext of resemblance to it that earthly affections, that sinful biasses, can choose and love? This new and unexpected worship proves that some rival has been substituted, that a counterfeited power has been interposed, and that sacrilege has been done upon that which no man ever valued without having first despised.—It is an appeal to *shame*. *Then, then*, is the offence ceased. What must be its desecration! What a cowardly abandonment is this of all its characteristic and peculiarity! When the foe can hail the ensign which is lifted against him, can cheerfully adopt its legend for his motto, can follow it for his augury whithersoever it streams, foul wrong must it have suffered, by a false-hearted treason must it have been betrayed! That can only have become weak which is no more feared by the weak, and wicked which is no longer shunned by the wicked. It is vilely cast away as though it had not been anointed with oil.

But the case, which is the subject of this sharp protest and indignant interdict, is the precise effect that man esteems most desirable, and that he most eagerly labours to accomplish. He accounts it a praiseworthy endeavour. He affects grief that there should exist any cause of offence, any point of annoyance, any ground of complaint, to the human mind,—that any objection should rise to its judgment, that any jar should be offered to its sensibility,—and employs himself to clothe the Cross with a perfect embroidery of fascination, and to obtain for it a universal acclaim of applause. He conceives that there are features which should be softened and circumstances which may be explained. He suggests that truth need not be too rigorously applied, nor first principles be too literally asserted. He would not "suffer persecution for

the Cross of Christ." He argues for palliatives and extenuations. He contends that some debasing matters and considerations ought to be concealed, that the precaution is demanded by deference to advanced opinion, that the reserve is due to the progress of manners and of times. The attempt varies in its means, now to give it philosophic cast, then to throw it into historic shadow; now to superadd, and then to diminish: but the motive is one, to accommodate it, to bring it down to the level of unsanctified attachment and associations, to bend it into an apology for all our natural principles, to transform it into an image made like unto ourselves,—in a word, to make the Cross what it is not, and what, unless it be deprived of all its intent and distinctiveness, it never can be!—A few preliminary enquiries must be instituted.

—What is to be understood by the Cross? Not the wood. How should we be the better did we possess the very tree on which the Saviour hung and died? Could it make us wise? Could it cause us to live for ever? Cast into bitter waters, would it infuse into them health and sweetness? Shall we fall down to the stock of a tree? A not unholy, a not unreasonable, curiosity might regard the relic, could it be verified, with emotions far different from those which the dreadest monument of antiquity might create. A thousand touching associations would hover around it. Like Calvary, on which it stood, we could not approach it or gaze on it without a tender awe. But soon as we ascribed one religious influence to it, paid one act of adoration to it, placed any portion of our confidence in it, we might as well carry its slivers as amulets and carve its beams into idols. The *true Cross* consists in a fact, the crucifixion of the Son of God: in a doctrine, salvation by atonement: in an influence and moral power, a hatred to sin, a weanedness from the world, a penitential devotedness to the Saviour. The Cross is

preached when the sinner is taught how he may be justified, and how he must be born again. "The preaching of the Cross is to us who are saved the power of God." There is a divine virtue in it. But the rood itself might be lawfully broken into pieces and consumed, because unto these days men burn incense unto it. As the brazen serpent which Moses made when abused to idolatry, was called Nehustan, mere brass, so might we call the Cross, Gnetz, Xulon, no better than simple wood.

—In what lies its scandalising property, its offence? It was early declared that Christ should be a sign spoken against, and that in connection with his death, when the sword should pierce through her soul who held the holy child. This obnoxious sign was therefore the spectacle of a crucified Messiah. It was not capricious but inevitable, not heedlessly or wilfully unfolded, but the necessary and only the necessary event. In Christianity there is nothing wantonly harsh and rude. Its language is, Giving none offence: Woe unto him by whom the offence cometh. But it was a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence, even to them that stumbled at the word, being disobedient. Now the following may be named as the principal exceptions taken to it by those who rejected it.

It was an improbable medium of revelation. For man can talk loudly how God should manifest himself and his purposes toward us. He is fond of anticipating the Father of lights, would teach him the path of judgment and show to him the way of understanding. Is it morally probable that all his dispensations should revolve upon the Cross for their pivot? Shall the Cross be the oracle by which He, who uttereth his voice in the thunders, will speak his deepest counsels to our race? "Who hath heard such a thing?"

It was a stigma on this religion which set it in disadvantageous contrast with every other. In the classic my-

thology death was not unknown. It was sometimes the reason of renown and the title to celebration. The hero rose to an empyrean throne or was changed into a heavenly constellation. Mysterious mournings as for the dead echoed through the Pagan temple, and then the songs of apotheosis swelled above them. But it was unheard of that the vilest of all deaths should give its absolute character to a religion, and that this religion of the cross should triumph over all. Yet this was avowed. It was to every nation an execrated form of punishment. "Cursed," said the Jewish law, "is every one who hangeth on a tree." The Roman code knew no infliction so ignoble as this. With what indignation does Cicero charge Labienus with setting up a cross in the Campus Martius, and that he delighted to pass the sentence, "Nail him to the accursed tree!" "words which," cries the orator, "are not only buried in the shadows of antiquity but cannot reappear amidst the splendour of our liberty."* And this was to be the exponent of the gospel. Must not this offend?

It was a violent disappointment of a general hope. There was a desire of all nations. Each nation, refined or barbarous,—each age, lettered or rude,—each country, near or distant, indulged its expectation. Sage and bard encouraged it. Poetry embalmed the tradition. Philosophy impressed its soberness upon the vision and gave it consistency. And was all that the earliest lay rehearsed, all that the highest wisdom enounced only to be wrought out in the shameful Cross? For this had Plato idealised and Virgil sung?

It was a humiliating test. Ambition, selfishness, insincerity, licentiousness, ferocity, pride, felt that it was encircled with an atmosphere in which they were instantly

* "Caput obnubito, arbori infelici suspendito; quæ verba, Quirites, jam pridem in hac republica non solum tenebris vetustatis, verum etiam luce libertatis oppressa sunt."—*Pro Rabirio.*

interrupted and condemned. The Cross would lift them up and devote them to its death. They shrunk before its rebuke as odious crimes. None could bear it who did not renounce every form of worldly lust. It was not an empty device or accidental symbol: it was the index of a thorough conversion and of a holy morality. Who of that generation, who that is unchristianised of any generation,—warrior, philosopher, poet, soothsayer, schoolman, priest,—could accept it with these conditions and not understand the cost?

—In what manner did the first preachers of the Cross exhibit it? So ingenuous, so unvarnished, was that manner, that it always prejudiced them: "to the Jews a stumbling-block and to the Greeks foolishness." They preached it not only in its integrity of truths, but without gloss and concealment. They refined not on it. Certain that the first statement would disgust, they knew well that every new statement, instead of allaying that disgust, would but exasperate it. But they declared this whole counsel of God, surpressing no circumstance, resisting no conclusion; leaving it, with all its infamy to shock, with all its mystery to amaze, with all its intensity to overwhelm!

But man is desirous of doing this away as a wrongful and unnecessary impression. He would make the offence of the Cross to cease.

1. *By fixing it upon some extrinsic authority.*

We cannot hide it from us that the more frightful adjuncts of the Cross, which once startled the sense of the world, do not now very readily suggest themselves. The gibbet-association does not violently recur. It is lost in newer and more attractive relations. The Cross awakens a stirring interest. Its loathsomeness is redeemed. It is the loveliest configuration of the starry heavens, it is the gnomon of chronology, it is the land-mark of empire, it is the crest of chieftainship, it is the signal of battle,

temples are constructed of its form, it glitters from the summit of architecture, it droops over the bosom of the beauty. But why? because Constantine preferred it to the Eagle, because conquest has been achieved beneath its banner, because kings have worn it on their diadems, because it is the creature of legislation and state. Thus regarded, it will no more offend than any other national escocheon, than any other heraldic ornaments of power and fame. "They set up their ensigns for signs."

2. *By torturing it into coalition with foreign principles.*

Human nature always remains the same in its great bearings. Being formed for religion, since it lost the true one it has sought out many inventions. Some religion it will have. This is invariably both the development and the organ of its depravity. Paganism is but the outworking of the heart. Antichrist is only another representation. And this will-worship is almost uniform. What were the ancient rites? their lustrations, postures, vestments, altars, thuribles? The same have found their supposed excuse and aliment in the Cross. Self-righteousness there fastens its hold: formalism thence extracts its rigour: superstition thither turns its trance. Heathenism is merely revived in it: another idolatry is subserved. Little difference will men detect in these respective modifications: none which they will resent!

3. *By transforming the character of its religious instructions.*

The religion of the Cross is a religion of *credence*, claiming a simple belief of its testimony as true and all-important, as a faithful saying and divine message;—it is a religion of *spirituality*, favouring but few observances and those most undazzling, searching the interior of man, requiring all to be done with the spirit and the understanding;—it is a religion of *holiness*, designating nothing as worthy of the name which the grace of regeneration does not inform and beautify;—it is a religion of *jealousy*,

suffering no impure mixture, no worldly alliance ;—it is a religion of *self-renouncement*, demanding of the sinner the dereliction of all his vain hopes and false pretensions. The cross might have been expected to bear out, to sustain, these views of Christianity : the pillar on which these principles were engraven, the safeguard beneath which they must be secure. But when the cross degenerated into the crucifix, all the truth kindred to it suffered an immediate corruption. Sense usurped the province of faith. Materialism superseded spirituality. Ceremonial was substituted for holiness. Parade was courted to the tawdry disfigurement of a severe simplicity. A meritorious commutation was established for human crime, a tribunal of satisfaction, a receipt of custom. What was begun in the spirit is to be made perfect in the flesh.

4. *By applying it to inappropriate uses.*

The enormities of human guilt are sufficiently revolting, but many of its darkest deeds have been perpetrated under the abused sanction of the Cross. When the third part of the world flew to arms, when nations poured themselves out of their territories like seas driven by earthquakes from their shores ; when dragon blood-thirstiness laid waste the fairest lands and slaughtered mercilessly the most unoffending races ; when hordes of marauders, as the swarm of locusts lighting on the living pasture or as the flight of vultures swooping on the battle-carnage rushed forth for devastation and pillage, sacking the tomb, rifling the dead,—they imprinted on tunic, they embossed on mail, as their warrant and their excitement, the red-Cross ! When Persecution has laid its impious grasp on conscience, has forged its instruments of cruelty, has wielded its sword and brand, and has passed as an eclipse between man and God, what justification has it pleaded, under what hieroglyphic have its familiars crept, by what patronage have its sophistries been defended ? The meekness and gentleness of Christ have been severed

from his cross, and that cross, dyed but by his own blood, has been made to clamour for drink-offerings of guiltless blood! When the human mind was to be cramped and compressed into the most prone and abject bondage, when the tyrant would not endure an enquiry nor the bigot a doubt, when it sunk beneath the sultry air of a prison and bounded no more in freedom's mountain breeze; the cross of Him, who is the Light of life and whose gospel is liberty, was so perverted that it became the argument by which all thought was to be crushed and the soul was to be abandoned to each slavish dream and fanatic doting. And in our day, how is this Cross warped to every unnatural purpose! Many are reconciled to its meanness, because they deem that it gives them an advantage in the denial of the Redeemer's supreme divinity. Many commend it even for the pardon which it brings, because they confound this with a release from the obligations of personal holiness. Why should we hate that which ministers to our passions, bends to our prejudices, conforms to our wills! Having moulded the cross according to our ideas and desires, is it any marvel that the variance between its first, its true, conception and ourselves should cease?

5. *By excluding its proper connections.*

It is not to be viewed as naked and detached, it is a centre to which all that is great and serious spreads out as circumference. While it is alone and single in its incomparableness, it is full of relations and consequences. It declares the righteousness of God. It is the basis of mercy to sinners. It is intended to sanctify as well as to expiate. It is the purchase-price of the church. It is the condemnation of sin. It gives a mysterious support to elect angels. It is the trophy of victory over fiends. It impresses a character upon the employments of heaven. It inspires the songs of eternity. Separate it from any or from all these moral relations, it will not offend: bound

up with all, the natural man receiveth it not, neither can he know it!

Nor is a sentimental approval that which may suffice. The mind may have little quarrel with many of our statements. It may be the less revolted that it scarcely enters into the distinctions. It gives not heed. Yet the Cross in some way moves it. But it is by its accompaniments, and not by itself. The essential truth, the simple event, does not affect. But let the exquisitely sculptured effigies be raised, amidst winding processions, waving censers, tender litanies, pealing chants, stoled ministers, awful aisles,—an *impression* is excited. What then? There is no mortified sin, no humbled pride, no crucifixion to the world. The pageant passes, the harmony expires, the sensation dies away. Let no man be deceived. The Cross is a compass of truths and results. All must be reckoned into it and all must be embraced. It is not the sign on which we rest; the signification is that for which we earnestly contend and exclusively care.

The *supposition* is, then, easy that the cross might be so altered to flatter and gratify the human mind, so modified to coincide with its opinions and desires, that its offence should cease: countless *facts* are on record or in sight to prove that this is not a merely supposeable case, but that it may be embodied and systematised on the largest scale. That is the Aim of man, an aim most criminal, mischievous, and fatal.

We have considered such Attempt of man. In contrast to it, we will now mark,—

II. The procedure of God.

We have seen that the cross, the true type and pledge of Christianity, may be placed in such factitious lights and may be contemplated through such false mediums, may be so distorted from its real excellence, and so polished of its real reproach, may be so illustrated and decked, that, instead of offending, it shall be taken into favour. Greatness

shall smile upon it. Power shall beg its alliance. Learning shall attest its worth. Nations shall swell its cry! Empires shall raise its signal! It shall grow into a thing of fame and awe. It shall seal the manifestoes of statesmen. It shall consecrate the codes of jurisconsults. It shall sparkle from the crowns of kings. It shall incorporate itself with the studies and the arts of mankind. Let it be the theme of *poetry*. Canto after canto shall recount its wonders and rehearse its deeds. The minstrel shall not sing without sympathy nor the epic rise without interest. All the cords of grief and indignation shall vibrate in response. Let it be the subject of *painting*. There are the frowning heavens and the rending rocks. There is agony, there is death. We mark the ashy hue of the flesh, the crimson blood trickling from his wounds, while there are grouped the bereaved mother, the beloved disciple, the converted centurion, coloured with the truth of Rubens, and drawn with the grace of the Caracci. Let it be the burden of *music*. It shall infuse into its composition all deep, rich, melting harmonies which float around us as voices from the inmost spirit, as the sweet concords in which hearts commune. Terror might arouse and pity might subdue. The scene might live in some descriptive passage, and the last sigh of the sufferer echo on in the cadence of some dying fall. Let it be the standard of *war*. In the enterprise which took its very name, its vermilion glowed on the shield of each warrior, fluttered in the pennon of each host, the soldier fabricated his sword-hilt into its form, and the palmer thus ornamented the top of his staff. Let it be the idol of *superstition*. It surmounts a shrine. Torches gleam around. Spirals of incense ascend to it. It is the object of invocation. Crowds lie prostrate before it. As it is raised to be adored, or carried in the procession of its triumph, how reverent is the head and knee, how ready is the attendant train, how solemn, fraught, affecting is

the emotion! But in this Christianity not only is not seen: it is abused: it is contradicted. All this may be the picturesque of sentiment, the religion of taste. It has nothing to do with a fellowship of Christ's sufferings, it is no conformableness to his death. In respect of any evangelic influence, of any end contemplated by it, it is lighter than vanity. "The cross of Christ is made of none effect."

But we may advance higher than even this and still fall short of the legitimate Cross. In Christ shall be confessed the noblest qualities. His death shall be admired as a spectacle of the moral sublime. A purer mood of intellect shall be stirred than any hitherto supposed. The best springs of our nature shall be touched. He shall be honoured, the teacher, the moralist, the patriot. His death shall be hallowed, though only in rhetoric, a sacrifice to virtue, to philanthropy, to truth Yet this is no just reading of Christianity, it is only a fiction, a tale that is told. It evades the actual import of it. It offers nothing of its actual efficacy. It is a god which cannot save. God's way is therefore to frustrate all these miserable perversions,—to set them all aside,—to honour the Cross as he knows and unfolds it,—to bring the sinner unto direct contact with it,—to suffer him to interpose nothing,—to add nothing of his own,—to subtract nothing however offensive to him,—that he may be brought under its original power and receive its complete impression.

The method is conducted after this sort.

1. It is necessary, if we would receive the proper influence of the Cross, that we be prepared to hail it as a *Distinct Revelation.*

There are those who intimate, if they do not avow, the idea that the religion of the gospel but elicits certain seeds of knowledge previously sown in the constitution of nature and in the depth of the human spirit. It is

there that they place its original and archetype. It was buried, perhaps to be raised, perhaps of itself to rise. They seem to hold that Christianity only a little anticipated that which we must have soon learnt independently of it. It is not authoritative, independent, supernal, dispensation; it is the evolution of truths which lie within ourselves. They represent it as already existing in outlines which were drawn of old: we are taught by it simply to trace them out. It always was: it is now defined. It ever was written in the volume of the moral world; it is now recapitulated more summarily and proclaimed more distinctly. Men saw it afar off: it is now brought nigh. It was detached: it is now reduced to system.—Now this is infidel artifice. It is to do away with all that is special and binding in Scripture discovery. It is to make it train-bearer and epilogue to antecedent, self-revealing fact. It is but a ceremonial convenience. It is the subservient echo of what might be already known. We deny not that there are truths with which the Christian revelation does not interfere, truths which may be learnt independently of it. Such are the physics of the universe, and it does not pretend to teach them. It would be to stoop. It would be to forget itself. It would be superfluous, for it only wants the language of mortals according to their apprehension of things. It would be unsatisfactory, for if it did not disclose every secret which science is now left to explain, if it snatched not away every folding of the veil which now covers our world, it would be open to the objection of the scoffer still. It would be detrimental in an inconceivable degree to the interests of man, extinguishing the possibility of mental effort and arresting the course of mental progression. The same limitation applies to even morals. The strength of Christianity is not expended upon them. It rather assumes their order and obligation. And this is necessary. For as Revelation proceeds

upon the existence of a Deity and could never prove it,—save as the addition of another *work* to those which have already demonstrated it,—so something at least of law must be understood, something of relationship to that Deity, to give any scope, to furnish any ground for such revelation. It may be said that when it is now borne to any heathen people, this state of things cannot be presupposed. Are they conscious of this law and this relationship? It would be of no argumentative force if they be not, for sin and idolatry may have combined to destroy its sense. But, in truth, not only the very scheme of the Revelation does take it for granted, but the missionary must appeal to it. He must, if he would make good his message draw it out. He must extort confession of it. Science, and the original ethics of our nature, do not, therefore, fall within the distinct province of what a Revelation intends. Its strict purpose, its proper idea, is to make known that which is not known, and which could not be otherwise known. Accordingly, this is the asserted character of the gospel. It is not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world. It is not some conclusion that the wise, the prudent, the disputer of this world, have reached. It is no gathering up of certain prepossessions and analogies. It is no happy venture in the large field of discovery and experiment. It is no method and condensation of far scattered, though strictly related, truths. It is the immediate ray from heaven. It is a great declarative act. The heart of man may be inventive, versatile, may range from heaven to earth and from earth to heaven, may reflect every vision, may dart every imagination, but these things could never have entered into it. They are things of God: his own deep things. They belong to His understanding which is infinite. They are things which none can know but the Spirit of God. They are in his dread Self-knowledge only. God hath revealed them unto us by

his Spirit. Man could make no approach to these informations. The void was that which the Divine Intelligence could alone fill. The silence was that which the Divine Word alone could break. And until we receive the testimony of the gospel upon this exclusive, dogmatic, authority,—as revealed and because revealed in this manner,—we set not our seal to it that God is true. Believing it for any other reason, our faith is in the wisdom of men and not in the power of God. Men of genius and of research may feel this to be humbling. They may be unable to conceal this aversion. They may contemptuously ask, are we blind also? They may refuse childlike, unquestioning, acquiescence. They have not "submitted themselves" to this manner of salvation. They will only depend upon some discovery which they have struck out, upon some hypothesis which they have framed. They must kindle the torch. They must seize the disclosure. Ah, how different the feeling of the Christian? He sees in the gospel the day-spring from on high which has visited him. He is convinced that all the lights of knowledge, that all the ages of time, would never have conducted him to this result. He owes it altogether to the infinite mercy. It is the pure shining forth of the Divine purpose. Full of the irradiation he exclaims: "I determine to know nothing among men, save Jesus Christ and him crucified." And this brings into every humiliation,—to grovelling,—to dust,—all the sufficiency of our nature, the pride of its reason, the boast of its independence, the attempt of its salvation. It is indebted for the very *thought* to the God of all grace. Not a mind but His, throughout the universe, had conceived it. There it rested until he manifested it. Still more must it trace to Him contrivance, means, and execution. His is the counsel, and his is the might. And who but the Christian knows the delight of being thus taught of the Lord! God shines into his heart to give him the light

of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. God reveals his Son in him. Not more directly did the elemental light proceed from Him who called it out of darkness then did the making known to man of redemption by the blood of the Cross.

2. When we rightly appreciate the Cross, when it has its full effect upon us, we recognise it as *the instrument of redemption.*

This was the mode of death indicated by prophecy, and foretold by Christ himself. Even type was only strictly fulfilled in it. None other death could have engrossed in it all inspired allusions and references from the fall of man. We behold every political machine securing the result. The Jews shall not put him to death, because crucifixion was not their manner of inflicting it. Their fury is directed by a power they little suspect. They say, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death." Did they mean that their law did not authorise it? That cannot be. Did they intend that the edict of their conquerors forbade it? Why had they then attempted to stone the Messiah? But they are blinded by their rage,—yet moved by invisible impulse,—and they resign the victim, whose death they seek to compass, in order that a stigma of death may be branded upon him. "That the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled, which he spake, signifying *what* death he should die." Many reasons justified and required it. Yet in it is no particular virtue: It could not render the death efficacious. The cross is but a circumstance in itself. The death of such a Person, however suffered, must contain the same merit. That blood, if shed and however shed, must avail for a perfect atonement. The Cross stands for that death,—gives an incidental and most wondrous character to that death,—and so far as the bodily death is intended, is, as the engine of dealing it, its memorial and sign. But it is an idle, unworthy, superstition that this mode of death wrought the

stupendous end. It is only an accessory. We must look farther into the mystery. "He his own Self bore our sins in his own body on the tree." It is that awful identity, that Mysterious Action, which expiates, and not the rood. "He by Himself purged our sins." Unless we "receive the atonement," the death is vain. It is useless sacrifice. It is called by every name which can mislead and disappoint. But when we so apprehend it, its purport is clear, its history consistent; its price is justified and its preparation explained. This is not an expedient among many expedients, a safe remedy among remedies equally safe. It stands apart. It shines alone. This is the one righteousness to justify the ungodly. This is the one propitiation to soothe the distracted conscience. This is the one vent and vehicle for mercy. And he who is not offended in it, being raised to its standard, rejoices that in this means is exclusive salvation, that he is shut up to it, because he sees in the fact the proof of its surpassing glory; and not the less that even his guilt and weakness can suggest no occasion for any way of deliverance more gracious and more potential than the Cross.

3. When our mind approves this method of salvation, it finds in it *the principle of sanctification.*

A new element of thought, a new complexion of motive, enter the soul when the Holy Spirit shows to it "the things of Christ." We are amazed at the "former conversation:" at our ignorance and our foolishness. We are new creatures. We reverse all our aims and desires. We are called unto holiness. What shall work it in us? Gratitude for the Saviour's love, common cause with his mission, sympathy with his design. "We are planted in the likeness of his death." It is an ever-present recollection. "We are crucified with Christ." We die to sin by that lingering and painful death. He died for us, and our end must be that for which he died. It was to redeem us from all iniquity. He superintends his own purpose

in us. "He dwells in our heart by faith." "We purify ourselves even as He is pure." Since these are the proper qualities and bearings of the Cross, it is plain that they must be acknowledged and embraced on our part in order that it may be availing. If you change every ingredient of the medicine, of what importance is it that you retain its name? You may call it the refuge still, but what shelter have you left when you have reduced it to a ruin. Therefore, if God scoff at the vauntings of our reason and the conceits of our merit, it is in mercy: it is not to mock, but to dissuade us from the fatuity of our attempt. He can make no peace, he can hold no parley on our own ground: all our claims must be withdrawn, our pretensions quashed, while we, who might have laid wholly at the disposal of justice, feel that we now lie wholly at the disposal of mercy. He humbles us to exalt us,—humbles nothing but our miserable pride, that he may "beautify the meek with salvation." He thus raises us to all the blessings and dignities of the Cross. We henceforth live beneath its holy atmosphere, its cloudless light, and its assimilating influence.

Mark the *Process*. We had hitherto abided in death. We had continued indifferent to the most mighty interests. Christ was preached, but he was dead in vain. He profited us nothing. We thrilled not with wonder nor grief nor joy. But now we are quickened with Him. He liveth in us. Our eyes are opened. It is like another sense. Our ideas are new. Each emotion is strange. We are disabused. Where have we been? What have we been doing? What long delusion has overpowered us? What has sealed our inward reflection? This loveliness was always near. This power was always present. These glorious thoughts were always ready to pass into the mind. If the gospel was hid, it was only hid because we were lost. But this wisdom is now justified of her children. Oh the "sweet wonders" of the Cross! What

power and love and holiness and truth and skilfulness does it unfold! All sinks by its side, all fades in its presence! It is the only greatness, the only strength, the only excellence! Perish all that withstand it! Vanish all that dims it! Let it stand forth, and name none other conception or type of conception, none other regard or bond of regard, none other marvel or possibility of marvel! Pillar, on which all moral victories are inscribed! Monument, to which heaven turns to learn that God is merciful, and even hell that God is just!

Mark the *Necessity*. Until we be brought nigh to it, until we take hold of it, the doctrine of the Crucified Saviour is an unintelligible and uninteresting thing. "He is of none effect to us." It is alienated from holy use. We see it only at a distance, and it scarcely moves the most transient feeling. Until it comes into contact with our mind, it can command no proper influence. It is not a blind agent, operating perforce. It works in no occult manner. It addresses the understanding. It convinces and persuades. It excites the moral dispositions. It puts forth its mastery upon all the sensibilities of the heart. It wins. It brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. We are called to his fellowship. He is our Lord Jesus Christ,—our life, our hope, our peace! It is our gospel! We are Christ's. And this oneness with Him who endured the cross and with all the purposes of his death, secures the ascendancy of every spiritual principle and the perfection of every Christian virtue.

Mark the *Effect*. There is a suddenly, though a most intelligently, developed charm. It is the infinite of attraction. All concentrates on it. It absorbs the tenderness and the majesty of the universe. It is full of glory. It combines whatever can make great or constitute greatness. It is the simplest of all simple things, —the deepest of all deep things. Is it occasion of

astonishment that, when perceived, our mind should become transformed by its power, and our existence rapt in its vision ?

"Behold, all things are become new." Scandal once appeared to us as the badge of the Cross. We saw an opprobrium in it which nothing could redeem. We cannot deceive ourselves in this matter. It is no palliation that as symbol, either patriotic or ecclesiastical, it did not offend. We speak of it as a system of truths and a centre of influences. We speak of the unsophisticated, the undespoiled, the uncorrupted, Cross. Like the inverted magnet, it revolted and repelled. But our heart has now yielded to it; is drawn, is held; coheres, coalesces; is itself impregnated by the sacred effluence. And now, in the only manner safe, beneficial, honourable, in the only manner which secures to it all its efficacy and all its grandeur,—THE OFFENCE OF THE CROSS HAS CEASED !

—Let us see to it that the Cross, in all its points of opposition to human pride, sensuality, ambition, selfishness, malevolence, shall offend. This opposition must always exist, and it must as certainly operate unless there be some attempt at accommodation. If you turn it into a worldly object or instrument, the world will love its own. But it is our duty to uplift it as the naked specimen of what was. Turn it every way against the natural principles of man: his self-righteousness, his self-dependence, his self-applause. Let not its powers sleep. It is the antagonist, necessary and natural, of sin. It must not distantly rise or faintly gleam on some imaginary Calvary, but move through the avenues of society, plant itself amidst the collisions of passion, and send forth its appeals among the children of this world. It is a thing of interposition, of rebuke, of action, of life.

—Let us see to it that whatever be its offence, it shall merely be its own. For there may be charges which can

bear no semblance of righteous application. If, while we would vindicate it, we contradict its absolute nature and intent,—if we crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame,—if we tread underfoot the Son of God, and count the blood of the covenant with which He was inaugurated a common thing,—then a new stumbling-block is heaped in the way of men, a new source of repugnance arises, with which the Cross cannot be commixed. It does offend, it would offend, all the evils of the world. This condemnation it provokes and boasts. But if inconsistency mark its defenders, if the corruptions which are in the world cleave to those who are its declared followers, it answers not for these. It is not implicated in the scandals by which the enemies of God are made to blaspheme. He who died upon it shall answer,—when of these stabs so foully, falsely, dealt, it shall be asked, "What are these wounds in Thy hands?"—"*Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.*"

—Let us see to it that we honour the Cross in the very proportion of the offence which is awakened by its reproof and counteraction of human prejudice and wickedness. How heavenly is this its unveiled character! How divine the glories which shine around it! It is a perpetual witness of God, like the sun in the firmament. It condemns sin. It is the spring of charity. It is the shield of justice. It is the cause of all happiness in the world. It is the Yea and Amen of truth. It can only bless as it is maintained in its salient and sublime offensiveness!

—Let us see to it that we confide in the Cross, on this account alone, as the instrument of turning men to God. Obliterate its offence, and it may partially lull, it may heal slightly, but it will not save. It must be for the fall, ere it can be for the rising, of any. It must probe to cure. It must subvert to establish. It must eradicate to implant. It must kill to make alive. This is the means. It calls for self-renunciation throughout all the strongholds,

all the deep-seated retreats, in which the accursed principle of selfishness has entrenched itself. It proclaims eternal war against it. It pursues it to destruction. It will not spare. But thus it saves the man, in that course which only consists with his salvation and which only can terminate in it, even by saving him from himself! Now we command the secret how he may be saved! Now we command the means of saving him! His disgust at it is an auspice of hope! Its irritation of him is a token for good! "God forbid that we should glory, save in the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ!"

SERMON XIII.

THE CONTRASTED HUMILIATION AND EXALTATION OF CHRIST.

Eph. iv. 9, 10.

Now that he ascended, what is it but that he descended first into the lower parts of the earth? He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.

The mighty Angel has winged his way from heaven,—earthquake has dislodged the ponderous stone which closed the entrance of the Sepulchre,—the hardy centinels, trained to watch and warfare, rush from their guard and flee in consternation,—the veteran legionaries will confess any breach of discipline, will endure any imputation of cowardice, will suffer any ban of infamy, will brave any form of punishment, to escape these mingled terrors,—the seal, which it was death to touch, is shivered,—and He, who was dead, is alive again for evermore, emerges serenely, rises triumphantly, with power as meek, with influence as resistless, with presence as diffusive, as the looking forth of that Dawn which He now prevented, which He has perpetually signalised, and which has been commemorated by his disciples since,—in unbroken succession, in unwearying faith,—nearly a hundred thousand times!

The most ordinary sense of right, found often in the rudest breast, induces us, on even common occasions, to rejoice in the vindication of innocence and the success of

virtue. We have witnessed their reproaches, marked their struggles, sympathised with their tears. Hence is it that we so much delight in the descriptions which represent the difficulties, the indignities, the repulses, which true worth too oft endures,—the clouds which obscure, the persecutions which harass, it,—but which wind up all with a climax and catastrophe of poetic justice. The triumph, though slow, is ultimately complete. Excellence is cleared. Goodness is crowned. Opposition is defeated. Hostility is crushed.

And now there glows to the eye, there breaks on the ear, of the Christian, the reality of these lofty sentiments, the celebration of these righteous acts. He, whom men despised and the nation abhorred,—who came out of Galilee, who was branded Samaritan, who was called Beelzebub,—who was hurried away to the death of a felon and the outcast,—who was nailed to the cross, an engine combining the agony of the rack and the infamy of the gibbet,—who died amidst the scoffs of the soldiery and the execrations of the multitude,—his visage marred by violence and defiled by rheum,—as though time had grudged him every moment and earth had spurned his shadow so long as it rested on it,—on whom contumely heaped its foulest and torture wreaked its worst,—Jesus has vanquished all that calumny could forge or malice could inflict. He has not only escaped from that which man could do unto him; his foot is now on the neck of his spiritual foes. He has paused, lest there should be any demand of justice which he had not answered: he has lingered, lest there should be another adversary whom he had not overcome. He has gazed around in vain. None such were to be found. No demand whispered: no adversary durst renew the contest. The Cross could strike no keener pang,—He had endured it. Shame could wring out no darker ignominy,—He had despised it. And now His glories gather around him!

The chariot of his ascension waits! The clouds are the dust of his feet! He flies on the wings of the wind! The heavens receive him! He is crowned with the diadem, he is installed on the throne, of the universe!—How wonderful is this transformation! He no more is rejected and set at nought: the principalities and powers in the heavenly places bend to him and worship him. He no more sinks down in weakness and death-like sorrow: he holds up the pillars of heaven. He no more is despised of man and numbered with the transgressors: he walks on high among the seraphim and the saints. Those hands, once pierced, now grasp the rod of his strength. Those lips, once quivering, now smile with the favour which is life! Those feet, once transfixed, now tread the firmament of the burning sapphire and the terrible crystal. That brow, once bound with thorns, now is circled with splendours which make pale before it stars and suns.—The wrongs of Immanuel are redressed! As many were astonished at him, as he was reviled and buffeted, as he was maligned and traduced, so has his reproach been rolled away. Full and glorious is his reward. Who arraigns him now? Where are his enemies now? He is reinstated in all his primæval greatness, with accessions which the finite mind cannot appreciate. It is his deliverance from every charge. It is his challenge of every honour. Hark to his defence! Hark to his acclaim! "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain,"—whatever be the contradictions of sinners, whatever be the blasphemies of fiends,—"Worthy is the Lamb, to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing!"

And who does not rejoice? Who will not leave, for a little season, even the consecrated scenes of His suffering and death, to "see Jesus crowned with honour and glory?" Bethlehem for "where He was before?" Gethsemane for Paradise? The brook Kedron for the River of life?

The city where our Lord was crucified for the new Jerusalem? Mount Calvary for mount Sion? Oh it is sweet for us to mingle our voice of praise with the concert of the skies! The Church feels a tender interest, beyond any power of utterance, in this blessed inauguration. Dear to her is this sublimest pomp. For her He was discrowned, and laid aside the ensigns of his state. For her He poured out his soul unto death. And shall she not exult to behold her Heavenly Bridegroom taking possession of his kingdom? Shall she not tell aloud the renown and right of her Almighty Guardian and Head?

Nothing is more important than that we should keep in memory and meditation the different and contrasted facts of Messiah's condescension and exaltation. Though none can affix the deep-most degree of the one, or the highest point of the other, still we must traverse all that we can of that mysterious scale. We must not only think of Him as slain on the tree, but as supreme over all things. We must not only come and see the place where he lay, but follow him to the abode of his essential life and eternity. He descended that he might ascend. He was immured in the lower parts of the earth that he might soar far above all heavens. His history combines all extremes: his "sufferings" are the titles to "the glory which has followed." Each is necessary: both are inseparable. Weakness becomes the source of might: abasement the reason of elevation.

I. The circumstances of the Saviour's depression from his original state.

It is the settled style of Scripture, in speaking of Deity, to represent Him by ideas of physical altitude: The Majesty on high. The Highest. The most High. The Lord on high. The High and Lofty One. He is higher than the highest. By reason of His highness we cannot endure. High is his right hand.—It thus expresses His abode: The high and holy place. Who dwelleth on high.

Glory to God in the highest. He sitteth upon a throne high and lifted up. Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are. Upon this, comparison is advanced: It is high as heaven, what canst thou do? For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.—By this, dignity is shadowed forth: Heaven is my throne, earth is my footstool. From heaven did the Lord behold the earth.—Nor is this only the strain of poetic diction. Even in narration, the most simple, does it occur: "The Lord went up from Abraham."

The Lord Jesus Christ is indicated in the same manner: He is the Son of the Highest. "Ye are from beneath, *I am from above:* ye are of this world, I am not of this world." "And no man hath ascended up into heaven, but he *who came down from heaven*, even the Son of Man who is in heaven." "He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly and speaketh of the earth: he that *cometh from heaven* is *above all.*" "The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the *Lord from heaven.*"

This planet is denoted in Scripture as "the earth beneath." Our Lord must "descend" to it. And this he did,—not with magnificence and majesty, as when "humbling himself to behold the things which are in heaven!" as when "bowing the heavens, and coming down, while darkness is under his feet!"—not with vehicles of power and amidst signals of fear!—but silently, meekly, disarrayed of his glories, emptied of his honours, "made lower than the angels," "a worm and no man, a reproach of men and despised of the people."

Now whatever may be the physical truth of these allusions,—elevation and descent, (and we cannot regard them as employed in simple conformity to our prejudiced or false conceptions of things) they principally intend what

we mean by the same class of terms in our speech. We say that a person stoops, that he bends, that he sinks. Moral correspondences to these actions are understood. They are condescensions. Immanuel is the name of our Saviour when born into our world, and dwelling in it: God with us. A local residence is thus described. And we are further informed of the degree which marks his "coming down" from heaven, of the manner in which he "came into the world;" he "descended into the lower parts of the earth." The language is wonderfully emphatic. It must be full of meaning. What lowliness is this! Similar terms are employed in other portions of the Inspired Volume: by collating them with those of the Text we shall most satisfactorily determine its sense.

1. *The Incarnation of Christ may be thus expressed.*

"My substance," said David, "was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth." We walk among mysteries in the announcements which are respectively made to us concerning this "new thing in the earth." The Maid of Nazareth is saluted by the angel. She is overshadowed by the Holy Ghost. "The virgin has conceived." The woman has covered the man." For the moment we must reverently think of Him who, "forasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, also himself likewise took part of the same;" waking to life and sensation by ordinary gradations and laws; the immature infant; the unborn babe; not "abhorring the Virgin's womb." "Unto us the Child is born." He hangs upon his mother's breast. We must follow him through his earlier years. "He increases in wisdom and stature." He is "brought up." "Behold the man." He did not break like a vision upon us, and as a vision disappear. His was the sojourn and organization of a life. He fulfilled a course. He numbered his generation. "He was made flesh, and dwelt among us." He felt all the fluctuations and vicissi-

tudes of the human lot and history. He advanced from nativity to death. His bosom swelled with the air by which ours heaves: he received the support of the ground on which our footstep treads: he eat of our bread and drunk of our water: he entered our abodes and conversed with our fellows: he articulated our speech and was surrounded by our scenery: our sun warmed him, and our evening refreshed him: when worn by travel he rested from weariness: rocked by the waves, he fell asleep: he yearned towards a parent, he wept for a friend: he was grieved in heart, he rejoiced in spirit: he mingled in the festive bridal, he visited the house of mourning: in all our afflictions he was afflicted, by all our sorrows he was moved: the cup of death made him recoil: that which is coming upon us all, he prayed to be averted. To what did he not submit? By what was he not buffeted? What insult did not disfigure his brow? What shade did not cloud his countenance? What deep waters did not go over his soul? His was humanity in its severest pressures and humblest forms. It is common, therefore, to dwell upon these outward deprivations and restrictions. We think of the stable and the manger, of the carpenter's son, of the mean offering with which he was presented in the temple, of his homeless wanderings, of his tombless remains. But there is little stress laid on any such poverty. He became poor, but that was in opposition to being supremely and divinely rich. He took upon him the form of a servant, but that was to his Father in his mediation. It is treated as no aggravation that his was not earthly pomp, and luxury, and ease. The Incarnation is all. We can see no difference between the hovel and the palace, between the lowest and the highest sphere of social existence, if He must be manifest in the flesh. Nothing can deepen this. Nothing can make it more. Had he come forth as Melchisedek, had he been seen on David's throne, there would have been no mitigation.

He would have been man, born of a woman! He would have been man, made under the law! He would have been man, for the suffering of death! He would have been man, in all things made like unto his brethren! He would have been man, tempted as we are! He would have been man, touched with the feeling of our infirmities! He would have been proper man! What accessories can affect this dilemma? What can diminish the burden of this abasement? What relief could secular titles and crowns have brought? We can understand no difference between manhood, as he assumed it, in its best estate and its meanest, the embroidered robe and the swaddling bands, the gorgeous couch and the crib, the costly cates and the coarsest fare. "God sent forth his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh!" No outward prosperity, no outward adversity, can reach this hidden thing, this stupendous thing, this unspeakable thing. His sublime, dread, perfect, consciousness of the fact must have lifted him far above the influence of accidental good, and equally must have bowed him far beneath the influence of accidental ill.

2. *This form of language may denote the Death of Christ.*

It is the ordinary phrase of the Old Testament: "They shall go into the lower parts of the earth." "Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps." The "body prepared for Him" was not liable to death. It could not "be dead because of sin." If it die, it must be self-deposition. "Will he kill himself?" said his countrymen. He revealed the awful prerogative which swayed it. "I lay down my life. No one taketh it from me; I lay it down of myself." But it was prepared for death, and constituted capable of it. This is further humiliation. It is going down deeper still. He is in flesh. Can wondrousness rise on this? It is mortal flesh! It is for the suffering of death! And does it not

seem strange for those lips to shut in death, which spake as never man spake? Those hands to droop in death, before whose outstretched gesture diseases fled and tempests calmed? Those knees to stiffen in death, which had borne him when He went about doing good? Those eyes to dim in death, where Heaven smiled and Godhead shone? Does it not seem strange that His soul should be commended hence, who had often bound death to his bidding and summoned from the grave its prey! He is brought low to the dust of death! The erect figure is prostrated! The instinctive life is arrested! The tongue cleaves to the roof of his mouth! Each limb is rigid! Each sense is closed! The breath no more heaves and warms the bosom! The heart is cold and still! That mysterious frame,—related to the Infinite and the Divine, temple of all greatness, shrine of all sanctity,—that "Holy Thing,"—sleeps in death. Wanness is on His cheek! Shrunken is His form! The eye-beam is extinguished! The mind's reflection, which lights the countenance, has passed away! He is cut off out of the land of the living! His life is taken from the earth!

3. *This Style may be intended to intimate that Burial to which He yielded.*

"Lest I become like them that go down into the pit." "So must the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth." His flesh must rest in hope. Look into that sepulchre. Contemplate the gear, the swathings, the cerements! The shrouded form! The darkened recess! The loneliness and the silence! The hurried rites of sepulture have ceased. No mourners hover near. The evening of the Preparation-day descends. The Sabbath dawns and wears away. Then falls another night. The pale lustre of the moon sleeps on the tomb and beseems it well. What a possession of a burying-place is this! Christ hath died,—is dead! But, amidst those shades, do no unearthly aspects gleam? Amidst that stillness, is there

no whisper of voices, no rustling of plumes? Do not angel-wings bend them into a canopy over the body of that flesh laid low by death? Do not the noblest watchers and holy ones of heaven keep their vigil here? O Grave! thou hast received in these exanimate relics, not thy spoil, but thy Conqueror! He will be thy destruction! Thy barriers are burst,—thy gloomy gates are set open for ever! Be astonished, O heavens! Your dews congeal upon his grave! Wonder, O earth! The clods of thy valleys are upon him! Thy bars are round about him! He has made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death! One general law could not apply. He saw no corruption. No reason was there why he should: every reason there was why he should not. That hallowed flesh, though it must die, why should it wither? It was not of the earth: it was not of descent: it was the spotless offspring of Divine Power. But this is interment. He is put away into darkness. He is held of death in its gloomy chambers. He is as a victim and a prey. It is a prison-keep.

4. *The Separation of the Redeemer's Body and Spirit may be described in these words.*

The description is not uncommon of departed spirits that they are "things under the earth," in contrast with "things in heaven,"—angels, the proper celestial inhabitants,—and with "things on earth," men, in their proper mundane state. Jesus claims mediatorially this homage of all angels, of all human spirits, of all the dwellers upon earth. "At His name every knee shall bow." If this denote voluntary service, then, "things under the earth," point out only the spirits of the just. This question, the parallel passage in the Apocalypse does not determine: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying: Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be

unto Him that sitteth upon the throne and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." For this sublime acclamation may only be considered as raised by the lower creation in a personified sense, as when trees are said to rejoice and floods to clap their hands. Yet are we inclined to think that, in both quotations, the spirit of deceased men must be understood. The conjecture, that our antipodes are intended, can scarcely be justified; for the thought is poor in itself, and seems to anticipate, contrary to the usage of Scripture, a state of knowledge which did not then exist. In agreement, then, with the general phraseology of that date, a happy state may be supposed. The Inferi included the gods, as well as the immortals, of the heathen elysium. The place, as nether to the surface of the earth, did not disturb their conception and assurance of its bliss. Yet can we be never satisfied that Scripture, in employing common ideas and common expressions, conforms itself to that which is not truth. We, therefore, confidently infer that spirits, departing in faith and peace, did enter such a region. And thither Christ descended in his human spirit when he died. He went into Hades. Now this is described as the state of disembodied spirits generally. The term declares nothing of their character, beyond their invisibility. The Saxon word, helle, conveyed no more than concealment. But of Hades there are two most dreadly opposite conditions: the abodes of the pure and the habitations of the wicked. Both are there, beneath its awful veil! The same remark holds good of the Hebrew word, Sheol. And there is a use of each of these terms which is not only inclusive, but preferential. Hades, standing alone, as well as Sheol, not only may comprehend the distinctions of reward and punishment, but may be put for only the first;—that is, its sense may be only good. In the Old Testament, Sheol may be seen, sometimes, opposed to punishment. "Hell is

naked before him; and Destruction hath no covering." "Hell and Destruction are before the Lord." Our Lord speaks, in the same manner, of Hades. He distinguishes between Paradise and Gehenna. He has warned us of the "great gulf between." His soul is now to be considered by us as arrived at this glorious, but hidden and subterranean sphere. It is Paradise. But was it the Heaven where now He dwells, the Incarnate God? Did his soul thus anticipate the honour of his ascension? Was it in the heaven to which he subsequently rose? We mark in this departure of his soul the simple requirement of death. It could not be retained. It descended into the lower parts of the earth. This is the reverse of resurrection and heaven-ward flight. It was humiliation. It was the carrying out of his mortality. He would not have died without this result. Wherever was the disembodied essence of thought and will, it was under the mortal law. He might be "free among the dead," but he was dead. He was in Paradise, and there welcomed the forgiven malefactor. Both were dead alike. Their spirits, and only their spirits, met,—though we forget not the awful relationship of His. How solemn is this interval between commending his soul to the Father, and his coming forth from his grave! It was a condition of sweet repose. It was blessed refreshment and rest. It was sublime satisfaction. It was a part of the joy set before him. But it could be no state of inaction. What announcements did He bear with him to the fathers of a former world, to patriarchs, to prophets, to kings, to righteous men! What greetings did they raise to Him who appeared among them the herald of his own accomplished work! With what songs did they utter his praise! With what raptures did they celebrate his love! And still he learned by the things which he now suffered. Endurance was not past. Death was not terminated. He learnt the fellow-feeling with the saints absent from the body. He learnt what

was the imperfection of an intermediate state. He learnt what it is for a spirit to wait for the resurrection. Thus he still entered into all the sensibilities of his people, whatever the world in which he found them; he was still touched with the feeling of their infirmities, even to those which they carry beyond the grave. He "descended," as we believe his people no more descend. Those "lower parts of the world" have yielded their inhabitants to a brighter region. He has gone to prepare it for them. They are with Himself, not in their former dwelling, but partakers of that "glory" into which he was "received up." That initial heaven of spirits that had departed ere He ascended, is abandoned as a place: it is lifted, as a state, to that consummated heaven of which it is written "the Lamb is the light thereof."

These are the gradations of His descent. These are the "lower parts of the earth" to which he declined. This is his coming forth from the Father! This is his coming down from heaven! This is his coming into the world! His measureless surrender of claims! His inconceivable renunciation of honours! Stooping to inferior and still inferior levels of ignominy! Plunging to deeper and still deeper abysses of shame!

But there must be an end of sufferings and abasements like these. They are unnatural. They belong not to any fixed condition of things. They contradict experience. They shock every standard of our ideas. Their continuance would derange all the relations of the universe. He died once. He dieth no more. Death hath no more dominion over him. It was not possible that he should be holden of death. We are, therefore, invited to behold a far different scene. "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him." Now comes indemnity, reparation, triumph! His right hand is lifted up. He hath the power of an endless life. The Lord shall reign for ever and ever!

II. THE GLORY OF HIS SUBSEQUENT EXALTATION.

"He ascended,"—a fact so clear, that his descent was suggested by it. "*Now* that he ascended,"—an affirmation which would be unmeaning, but that he "descended *first* into the lower parts of the earth."

We have beheld his body laid in the Tomb: we have followed the passage of his soul into the heaven of spirits, that heaven which received all sainted spirits until that "he ascended," that heaven in which his spirit appeared,—but surely not that heaven to which "he ascended *on high*," with his "glorious body," and to which he now draws all the souls of his people. His corpse thus earthed, his spirit thus separated,—we must endeavour to conceive of the moment, in which all the power of death and all the dominion of the grave were suddenly suspended. In inspired language, "He revived!" That bosom once more rose and fell, the heart warmed and throbbed, the vital pulse leaped high; the soul returned, the ear listened, the eye saw, perception and memory made certain all around, "he lived unto God,"—calmly he divested himself of the badges of mortality, and arose in a manner so wonderful and divine, that, while each evangelist attests the fact, not one ventures a description!

His exaltation consists not simply in his resumption of primæval glory. He took upon him our nature, not as Adam was at the first invested with it. A glory and honour may have played, like a nimbus, around our father's brow. His was an undying body. He was perfect in his faculties and intuitions at once. He trode on an earth where all was innoxious. The sun did not smite by day nor the moon by night. All ministered to him. No infirmity depressed him. One smile cheered, one song saluted, him. He was the centre of his world. But when the Redeemer was "made flesh," his incarnation was not thus magnified. It was "the likeness of sinful

flesh." It was in the order of common arrangements. He was born. He learnt wisdom. He grew in stature. He felt want. He suffered pain. He died. He was made "like unto his brethren." "He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not." He held the winds in his fist, though they often raved pitilessly around him. He replenished each river-source, though often denied the refreshing draught. He rolled on the orb of day, though often scorched by its fiercest beams. He clothed the lily of the field, though his seamless garment was all that fell to the soldier's lot. He bore up heaven and earth, though he sunk beneath his cross. He, the Prince of life, bowed his head and died. He, the Lord of glory, hid not his face from reproach and spitting.

Now because His manhood was the occasion of degradation and the subject of infliction, He will be rewarded in it. It shall for ever constitute a portion of his person. It shall be the medium of his brightest manifestations. It shall be the subject of his most glorious honours. It shall be the title and basis of all his mediatorial offices. A new class of distinctions is necessitated, because he was "born of a woman," because he has "come in the flesh," because he is "found in fashion as a man!" In what can this Act claim such transcendence of reward.

1. *It is in itself an absolute Expression of Love.*

To descend to all this humiliation and suffering could not have been required for any purpose, could not be agreeable to any other end, save an achievement of mercy. Justice and wrath can sweep along in their fiery track without this sojourn in our earth and with our race. They need not have stooped. They were not required to bend from their flight. A manifestation in the flesh was not wanted to condemn the world. If He came forth to punish its inhabitants, it was not for him to wear the robe of that nature which he would rebuke

with his anger. All means of vengeance were at his control. Heaven would have emptied its vials and shot its flames. Man would have perished at a glance of divine indignation. This could not be the design of the Incarnation. It was superfluous, uncongenial, for any like design. It proclaims the opposite motive. It is unreasonable but as a means of recovering grace.

2. *It justifies an Expectation of Surpassing Benefits.*

Whatever was the quality of the Act, it must answer to the act itself. Nothing little can it involve. Thought and imagination could be guilty of no extravagance in hasting from such premiss to its conclusion, from such cause to its effect. If this be an errand of mercy, how great must be that mercy! It shall be built up for ever. Its blessings correspond: "the sure mercies." Its inducements reciprocate: "By the mercies of God present yourselves a living sacrifice." At its announcement the world was moved. The torpid nations rose into hope and hailed their Desire; angels filled the vault of heaven with new cries of joy and admiration; fiends recoiled from the torment, the time of which seemed thus hastened; they who looked for the consolation of Israel and for redemption in Jerusalem, felt that now they had lived long enough to repay and fulfil their lives: and the last prophecy of the ancient law died away on their dying lips, "A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of the people Israel!"

3. *The Act regulates and secures its own Efficiency.*

The Messiah did not send his word to save us. From on high He did not direct the scheme of salvation. He "descended to the lower parts of the earth." This showed his infinite intentness. It was "*seeking*," in order "to save, that which was lost." He reduced himself to our low estate. He pierced to the core of our misery. He sounded to the depth of our woe. He wound about his heart all our sympathies. He placed

himself in every condition. He accustomed himself to every trial. His head was a fountain for every tear. He eat with sinners. He encouraged the penitent. He soothed the mourner. He comforted the bereft. There is nothing of human want but must be comprised in the range of that humiliation, which is great as the difference between heaven and earth, vast as the disparity of God and man!

4. *This Act is to be regarded as of Incomparable Worth and Excellence.*

The mission of Christ contemplated the highest principles which can direct the Divine conduct. He came to vindicate that Character which to conceive aright is the happiness of all creatures,—to uphold and avenge that Law which cannot be infringed without an utter loss of good and overthrow of order,—to atone for Sin whose slight and impunity would have been the allowance of infinite mischiefs and evils,—to bring in an everlasting Righteousness adequate to the justification of the most guilty, and of the most multiplied, objects who needed it,—leaving it for ever proved, that no rule nor sanction of God's moral government can be violated without a necessary and meet resentment! How holy is the Redemption which is in Him who "descended into the lower parts of the earth!" "Wherefore, when he cometh into the world, He saith, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." "He finished transgression and made an end of sin." All piety was in this submission. It breathed the perfect reverence for eternal rectitude and truth. Obedience, save in him, never attained such purity, benevolence such disinterestedness, devotion such ardour, zeal such constancy, holiness such beauty. Never were so combined, and never could so unite, the jealousy of the Infinite Honour and the commiseration of human woe. "It was an Offering and a Sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given him a name above every name." "He hath set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."

As His Humiliation supposes a change in space, even to different regions in it, and thus illustrates metaphorically his moral descent and depression,—so, his Exaltation takes the same form and scale, he returns on high, he goes up with a shout and the sound of a trumpet, he goes into heaven, "he ascends far above all heavens that he may fill all things," all this local transition shadowing forth his moral greatness and his supernally glorious reward.

Even immediately after His resurrection, the Manhood of Christ seems singularly transformed and heightened. It is ethereal and spiritualised: less tributary to physical conditions, less chained to material laws. Largely, as far as its finite restrictions admit, does it partake of the Divine satisfactions of the Mediatorial reward. It is anointed with the oil of joy. Never let us forget that God-Man, who is in the midst of the throne!

His Ascension was a radiant triumph. Scarcely is it more described than his resurrection. We catch but a few notes of the resounding acclaim, we mark but a few fleeces of the glory-cloud, we recognise but a few attendants of the angel-train. With that laconic force which characterises Holy Writ, it is simply recorded: "Who is gone into heaven." The Text unfolds two peculiarities of that "departure out of this world unto his Father."

He surmounts all Height.

The modern astronomy lays open to us scenes of amazement. The eye of man, from the beginning, was raised to the hosts of heaven. Their orders little understood,

their influences strangely imagined, they were always spectacles of attraction and too often snares of idolatry. Of old were only seen the star and planet which lie nearer to our earth. The spangled concave, as it appears to our naked sense, was merely scanned. Scientific mechanism brings invaluable assistance to the spirit of discovery. We now observe layers and chambers of stellar light. Rents and openings in the studded floor of the firmament disclose other and superior glimpses. New suns light up to our notice. New systems revolve to our view. Whithersoever our lens can traverse, there is no check, no solitude, no gloom. Still may we rise. We have not touched the flaming bounds. More constellations shine from above us than we have left below. Our powers weary. Our helps fail. But nothing else arrests our pursuit. We see the elements of unknown celestial phænomena already forming, and fast maturing, to take their centre or to run their course. Clusters, in inconceivable distance, unfold themselves, like tinted vapours or insect swarms. Fancy, when sight and instrument can search no more, itself is stayed. The platform of worlds still stretches on. Upward the series is sustained. The emptiness of space is never reached. Void is nowhere found. The spheres still intersect in safety and quire in harmony. Expanse evolves expanse. Heaven opens after heaven. The whole is as a ladder which, for aught we know, may rear itself to Jehovah's glorious seat and "holy heaven." But baffled as we are in this labyrinth and this culmination of created marvels,—He, who descended, has ascended far above them all. Speak of the third heaven. Tell of the seventh. He has soared above "all heavens!" Firmaments he has spurned behind. Systems he has thrown beneath. Stars could not measure his steps. Suns could not constitute his waymarks. He has attained a peerless region, of which we cannot conceive, "heaven itself," "the heavenly things themselves,"

where is his dwelling-place, his Presence, his Vision, his Throne! It is local exaltation! It is in the highest! Scripture assures us, with its majestic conciseness, that "*He is made higher than the heavens!*" And can we wonder? He is the Former of those millions of earths and luminaries, above which he climbed. "By him were all things created, visible and invisible." He had "meted out heaven with the span." "He bringeth out this host by number; he calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth." "By his spirit he garnished those heavens." His are "the balancings of the clouds." "He binds the sweet influences of Pleiades and strengthens the bands of Orion." He "bringeth forth Mazzaroth in his season, and guides Arcturus with his sons." His path to heaven was reascension, and lay through his own dominions, even the works of his own hand!

He penetrates all Existence.

"There is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things and we in him." As the Humanity of our Saviour gave limitation to certain acts of his Mediation, so his Godhead gives infinity to its other acts. "He," therefore, "filleth all in all." Omnipresence is his essential attribute. Its exercise and its right cannot depend upon his ascension. But as Mediator he arose. He was in this character "received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." It is his Mediatorial influence of which we speak. "He has all power in heaven and in earth." "He has power over all flesh." This he could not wield but as possessed of divine dignity. He "fills all things." He is in heaven! "To be with Christ," to be "with him where he is to behold his glory," is the most blessed distinction of that state. He is in hell! The "torment of fire and brimstone is in the presence of the Lamb." He is on earth! "Where two or three are met together in my name, there

am I in the midst of them!" He is with all his church: "Which is his fulness." He is with each believer: "Christ in you the hope of glory." He is accessible to the vilest sinner: "Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast received gifts for men; yea for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." He replenishes and fills immensity: he "inhabiteth eternity." What are the worlds which he does not govern? Where are the regions which he does not control? Let nature's deepest retreats, let creation's farthest secrets, confess that he is near at hand: that his grasp is the safegard of every angel and worm, the orbit of every sun and mote!

Oh may our conceptions swell to this theme! "He is head over all things to the church." Every other constitution is merged in his reign. There is not a wheel of the universe but rolls in sympathy with his purpose. All events move beneath his will. Crown after crown is added to the diadem of his brow. His name is above every name. All things shall be subdued unto him. His enemies shall become his footstool. He is Lord of all. "He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high." "In all things he shall have the preeminence."

But the design and spirit of the Redeemer's "descent into the lower parts of the earth" and of his "ascension above all heavens," are uniform. They are impelled by one motive. He is of one mind. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He swerves not from his eternal purpose through changes the most extreme and tremendous. This we must not overlook.

III. The reciprocal influence of these respective facts.

"The Same" was He, who bowed himself to these indignities, and who seized these rewards. And this identity is of the greatest value.—The signs of death were plain. He thirsted, his head drooped, he was pierced

to the heart, there flowed from the wound a stream of blood and water, he gave up the ghost. He was buried by friends. He was guarded by enemies. He arose. "He showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs." By the most timid he was confessed. By the most incredulous he was recognised. His bodily form could not be mistaken. He bore the scars of his cruel inflictions. He had but to speak, "Mary," and she knew her Lord. Moral traits were as indicative. "He appeared unto Simon." "He was seen of Cephas, *then* of the twelve." How does this incident of narrative contain a stoke of pathos which places beyond all doubt that "He is risen indeed,"—and with that face which turned and looked upon Peter,—and with that heart which had prayed for him, and cherished him notwithstanding his falsehoods, his denials, and his oaths! And surely it is much to understand, much to be certified, that He who was manifest in flesh,—taking our very nature, seen in the relationships of our life,—full of tenderness and compassion,—the comforter of mourners and the friend of sinners,—is none other than the Supreme over all things, guiding and administering all his prerogatives and powers to the very end for which he was incarnated and crucified! This is what the Text affirms. "Now He that descended is the same also that ascended."

It is always interesting, beautiful, when the chaste forms of earlier feeling, the young yearnings of the heart, renew themselves. A generous fountain of our inward nature then bursts forth. We live in a better past. We become unsophisticated, once more, in our views and sensibilities. We recover ourselves from the illusions of passion. The fresh, sweet, earnest, simplicities live again. "Is this thy voice, my son David? And Saul wept." "Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him."

Were ever such Extremes as those which we now sur-

vey? No contrasts, however violent, can approach unto them. Yet when men have been the subjects of transition from poverty to wealth, from obscurity to fame, rarely has no moral change ensued. They have been carried away by pride, by ingratitude, by scorn. Intimates have been slighted and benefactors forgotten. Who, but in a profound calculation of human nature, could have supposed the vile transformation?

Feeling how difficult, how abhorrent, is every allusion of such a kind to Him of whom our "heart" would only "indite a good matter,"—still, thinking on this Glorification of the Son of Man, his investiture with all honours, his accession to all rewards, it is too natural for our selfish hearts to fear some estrangement of his love from us, some repression of his ardour in our cause. Can He think upon us? Can he care for us? What is our planet to that eye which expatiates through infinitude? What is the interest of our species to that mind which comprehends every system of beings? The suspense is obviated. The fear is answered. He has borne our nature with him. The names of his people are on the breast-plate of our merciful High Priest. He has entered heaven for none other object than that for which he entered earth. His heart cannot grow cold. Nothing can alienate its affection. "Unto him who hath loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, to him be glory and dominion for ever and ever!" On Tabor, amidst anticipated glory, he would speak only of his decease! In Patmos, amidst consummated glory, he would speak only of having died!

Now meditate any *Work* of Christ. There is one which absorbs every other. To this he steadfastly set his face. His heart glowed with vehement desires for its accomplishment. Would Peter dissuade his death? How stern the rebuke! "Get thee behind me, Satan." Is Judas plotting that death with all the treachery of his dark and malignant soul? How serene the sufferance! "That

thou doest, do quickly." To redeem his church, to offer sacrifice for sin, to secure an endless meritorious right and power, constituted the emphasis of that work. It behoved him to suffer. He must die. Then must it, to that degree, and with equal force, engage all his present attention and zeal,—for "He that descended is the same also that ascended!"

Meditate any *Sympathy* of Christ. "In the days of his flesh" he manifested every form of compassion. What affliction did he not soothe? What wound did he not heal? The cry of sorrow pierced his ear. The figure of misery arrested his eye. He passed from pallet to bier, from bier to grave. The tale of grief saw him not doubt. From importunity he turned not away. The abjectness of contrition he did not spurn. The bruised reed he did not break, and the smoking flax he did not quench. Those fibres which vibrated in his bosom here, still clasp his heart. His soul is yet wrung with that commiseration. He hears all prayer, redresses all wrong, pities all calamity, pardons all sin,—for "He that descended is the same also that ascended!"

Meditate any *Promise* of Christ. "Where two or three are met together in my name, there am I in the midst of you." "For he hath said, I will never leave thee, I will never forsake thee." "I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am there ye may be also." He has passed into heaven to make these averments good. He is in heaven, that he may be on earth with his people. He is in heaven, that he may be the unfailing strength of those whom all have forsaken but himself. He is in heaven, that he may secure for his disciples its blessed receptacles, and thence return to welcome them to their prepared seats above. For "He that descended is the same also that ascended!"

Meditate any *Office* of Christ. He is Prophet: he sitteth

at the right hand of God, that he may shed forth the Spirit to teach us all things. He is Priest: he sitteth at the right hand of God, that he may ever make intercession for us. He is King: he sitteth at the right hand of God, that he may rule our hearts. He is Surety: he sitteth at the right hand of God, that while he lives we may live also. He is Representative: he sitteth at the right hand of God, appearing in the presence of God for us. He is Forerunner: he sitteth at the right hand of God, and our "hope *entereth* within the veil, whither he hath for us *entered*." "For he that descended is the same also that ascended!"

Meditate any *Command* of Christ. Select, if you please, that one which has peculiar claim. He wills that his disciples do spread his truth. He not only urged this duty ere he died, not only after he had risen, but even in the act of his ascension. "Go ye into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,"—had scarcely passed his lips when the awful transformation wrought in him, and he clave the air and mounted to heaven. Long as his countenance was seen, this was the expression! Long as his voice was heard, this was the echo! It was his last command. Scarcely had he ceased,—and he had sat down on his throne, as a King, to enforce it still. He yet pleads the same cause and impresses the same responsibility. Eighteen hundred years are to him but as a day which is past. What was his pleasure and his authority, so expounded and so declared, can undergo no change. The world has he left for us to evangelise. "For he that descended is the same also that ascended!"

And, therefore, may we see the causes why we should rejoice in the exaltation of Christ. Not only do we hail him in his reinstatement in original dignities, but in the augmentation of his glories. Deity was never so beheld before. There is a combination and a form of the divine perfections entirely new. And what is our delight

to witness the reparation of all *his* wrongs! No more is he a sign to be spoken against! Where is the Traitor to kiss him? Where is the Governor to condemn him? Where is the Spearman to pierce him? Let Him be crowned with honour and glory! Let the living creatures and the elders fall down before him! Let all the angels worship him! Let the redeemed adore him in canticles of grateful joy! "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors! and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of Glory!"

The effort of our mind, in these contemplations, must be rather directed to the Manhood, than to the Divinity of Christ. It is not absorbed in its awful fellowship. It is distinct and integral, while it is ineffably but one with that to which it is conjoined. True it is that it is written: "Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more." But this is simply the disclaimer of nationalism. Men had rested every thing upon the distinction of Jew and Gentile. The Christian Jew boasted that Christ was one of that people, a son of Abraham, of the seed of David. He mingled a patriotic feeling with his faith. He regarded all nations as inferior to his own. But the gospel justified no such partial and exclusive interests. It would know no man after the flesh,—no matter what his descent, it knew him only as the sinner. It would not know Christ after the flesh,—no matter what his genealogy, it knew him only as the Saviour. But as come in the flesh, and as exalted in the flesh, Christ is ever to be known. "He that descended is the same also that ascended."

And yet how often do we distrust this identity! How

often we deplore the departure of the Redeemer from us! Like the children of the Bride-chamber we, in these days, mourn. We repine that He is not here. We forget that it is expedient that he should go away. Heaven alone provides scope for his undertakings and channel for his influences. There must he abide until the restitution of all things. But nothing of his sympathy or his grace do we forego!

We are tempted to suppose that, were the Messiah now a sojourner upon our globe, he could bend more easily to our circumstances and more tenderly enter into them. We could let down the paralytic in his presence. We could bear our young child to him. We could draw him into the death-chamber of our little daughter. We could supplicate him for our servant lying sick. Earthly proximity seems to secure success. "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died." Ah, "slow of heart to believe!" Has he forgotten to be gracious? Does he refuse to hear? Has he forsaken the earth? Nothing will he now forbear to do which he would not forbear, if still he "dwelt among us."

We are tempted to suppose that, did the Saviour yet tread this earth, the contrite sinner would find more ready access and receive more immediate pity. Then, burdened with our guilt and misery, how easy would it be when the cry was made, Jesus of Nazareth is passing by,—to press through the multitude, to throw ourselves in his path, to touch the hem of his garment, to wash his feet with our tears, to hold fast those feet until that he had pronounced us forgiven. But when He spake, during his terrestrial visitation, of men coming to him, did he mean their bodily approach? Was it not their spirit's contact in faith, and penitence, and prayer? Is that now debarred? "Wherefore he is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them."

And He shall come again! He shall appear once more

in that glorified Humanity, in that manifested Godhead! A second time he "descends!" How unlike his first advent! Then, he had no form nor comeliness for men to desire. He was no kingly state. He made himself of no reputation. He bent his way to "the lower parts of the earth." It was a mysterious eclipse. He hid himself. He sought not glory. But now, shall He burst forth in uncreated splendours! Every eye shall see him! He shall judge the world! "He shall be glorified in his saints and admired of all them that believe!" The vision may tarry,—our faith may be tried,—ages may intervene,—"This SAME JESUS, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven!"

SERMON XIV.

THE IMMEDIATE BLESSEDNESS OF DEPARTED SAINTS.

HEB. xii. 23.

AND YE ARE COME TO THE SPIRITS OF JUST MEN MADE PERFECT.

WHAT an announcement! What a gratulation! For the manner in which this passage is introduced sufficiently shows that it is designed to impart encouragement and solace, to awaken spiritual-mindedness and hope. The spectral dead are not invoked, the state of disembodied souls is not unfolded, to startle and alarm, but to relieve and soothe. It is a spectacle presented in contrast to another insupportably terrific. From Sinai,—its stern array, its horrible tempest, its fiery law, its thunder-trump, its voice of words,—from "that mount Sinai," beneath whose frowning precipice, at whose rocking base, we exceedingly tremble and quake,—we are invited to approach mount Sion, the heavenly Jerusalem, with its holy, happy, concourse,—its innumerable company of angels, its general assembly and church of the firstborn,—its ever-accumulating throng of spirits made perfect. Such contemplation, though solemn and almost dread, must be intended to yield our ruffled minds repose, to still each impatient feeling, to heal the lacerations and breaches of the heart. Lost in this contemplation, time dwindles to a point, earth attenuates to a shadow, the tears of grief brighten into those of rapture, heaven bursts in upon us and fills up the whole field of our vision!

And yet in these words there is something which seems to mock us, something which may excite our consternation, something which may depress our zeal.

—"*Ye are come* to the spirits of just men made perfect." Is not this to mock us? Know we not otherwise? Is it not the actual contradiction and reverse of all we know and feel? It is they who have gone. We have them no more with us. They are not. We see them not, we hold them not, they enter not our threshold nor cross our path,—they accompany not our walk nor sit at our board. "Lover and friend are put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness." What approximation can we make towards them? What access can we command? The link, between ourselves and those whom we loved, is broken. Wide is the interval between us. Their land is far off from this. They could not retain their spirit. We could not stay their flight. Does it not seem to trifle with us, when we are "bereaved indeed," to tell us that we are come to them from whom we are so hopelessly and irreparably torn?

—"Ye are come to the *spirits* of just men made perfect." Our natural apprehensiveness is thus excited by the appeal. Creatures of flesh and blood, nothing seems so strongly to fasten upon our instinctive fear as spiritual contact and communication. We recoil from such phantom-visitation: we chill and shudder at its mere description. We have the appalling recital. "In thoughts from the visions of the night, when deep sleep falleth upon men, fear came upon me and trembling, which made all my bones to shake. Then a spirit passed before my face; and the hair of my flesh stood up: it stood still, but I could not descern the form thereof: an image was before mine eyes, there was silence, and I heard a voice."* As we read this harrowing description, our blood freezes, and we hear the beatings of our heart. There is vivid

* Job iv. 13—16.

truth in it. It is a startling reality. When the disciples from their tempest-driven ship saw Jesus walking on the waves of the sea, "they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit, and they cried out for fear." When, after his resurrection, he suddenly appeared among them as they were gathered together with closed door, "they were terrified and affrighted and supposed that they had seen a spirit." Who would wish to behold the dearest friend whom he had ever loved, returning a spirit from the region of spirits, with their manner and mien and mystery? What nerve could encounter the interview? What fondest heart could endure the shadowy embrace? And do we not shrink when we are bidden to approach this ghostly band?

"Ye are come to the spirits of just men *made perfect.*" Our ardour is depressed. Our sympathy is checked. Our imitation is debarred. It is too common to feel pleasure in the limitation of excellence, in the detection of infirmity, among others, because it reduces them to a closer level with ourselves. Yet we can do honour to high examples. They awaken kindred enthusiasm. They fire us with emulation. Only they must not be set on an inaccessible height. Then our ambition is quelled, our effort is disconcerted. But if these spirits be exhibited to us as our patterns, they seem to possess nothing in common with our present lot. They are withdrawn from all our weaknesses and temptations. They have quitted the fight. They have ceased the pilgrimage. How shall we follow the perfect? Little fellowship can we claim with their refined essences, their unalloyed purity and bliss: they subsist beyond the range of our ideas and susceptibilities.

But the purpose of the Holy Ghost in these words must stand: that purpose can only be tender, consolatory, assuring. And is it not most kind and cheering to inform and certify us, that they, who are thus departed, are not

lost? That, rescued from the burden of this flesh and delivered from the hazard of this world, they expatiate in the freedom of a nature ethereal and incorruptible? That every sorrow and every defilement have passed away from them, though they felt the pain and struggle of both in their earthly condition? And is it not animating and triumphant for us to perceive, in their release, the pledge and model of our exaltation, when those to whom we are still united, notwithstanding our apparent severance, shall welcome us and "receive us for ever,"—when our spirits shall throw off their oppressions, and shall attain to yonder state of immaterial being?

Come, then, Dear Christians, to these spirits,—endeavour to conceive of them, to catch their fervours, to reciprocate their joys, to respond their strains!

1. "Who are they? whence came they?" They are not the natives of heaven. They have no proper birthright in it. They belong to a very different sphere. They are men. They have been prepared, while on the "earth which was given to them," for their present abode. They have been brought hither by an act utterly independent of their original constitution. It is a state altogether strange and new.

A man may be considered *just*, when he discharges all the obligations which are equitably laid upon him, obligations growing out of his individual and relative existence. If the man render that homage which God as Creator deserves, and yield that obedience which God as King prescribes, that man is just with God. If the man act in every connection with his fellows, with an impartial regard to their rights and interests, there is no iniquity in his hands in respect of them. In what he does, he shall live. He cannot come into condemnation. But there is only a supposeable argument in this. It is entirely unsustained. There is not, in the present nature of man, an approach to this standard. Every tendency of disposition

is untoward. "There is none that seeketh after God." "There is none righteous; no, not one." "There is not a just man on the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not." They have "done iniquity as they could."

Such a fallen creature cannot retrieve himself. If he find acceptance, it must be by another's righteousness: if he be made holy, it must be by another's influence. Nothing can originate with himself. From without, from above, must come his help. Guilt cannot achieve justification: pollution cannot work out sanctification.

And of all this blessed throng there is not one, but was the sinner, loss, ruined, perishing, like ourselves. Think of the most sinful,—"Such were they!" And, thus thinking, we strengthen our hearts as to our own salvation,—"We believe that through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, we shall be saved even as they!"

Nor can the method vary. "Neither is their salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." "Ye must be born again." These are the essential requisites. They constitute the *just*. Only the *just* can be in a condition of safety and favour, only the *just* can be endued with a nature of sanctity and love. "The just by faith shall live"—or this believer is justified. "O let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end, but establish thou the just,"—their "justice" is opposed to "wickedness." This is the two-fold characteristic. Man can only be *just* as he partakes of both. A relative, and an inherent, righteousness alone gives the warrant of that title and the secret of that transformation.

Still the more prominent use of this epithet is, to express principle and disposition. "The way of the just is uprightnesss: Thou most Upright dost weigh the path of the just." "The ways of the Lord are right: the just shall walk therein." Therefore, when the term is attached by Scripture to the most excellent of our race, it is accom-

panied by some other virtue which marks its specific manifestation. A new graft is set on the common stem, drawing forth from the common life the peculiar nature. Noah was a just man and perfect,—his clear integrity is the illustration. John the Baptist was just and holy,—his taintless and severe sanctity is the proof. Simeon was a just man and devout,—a rapt piety is the development. Joseph of Arimathea was a good man and just,—benevolence is the note. Cornelius was just and one that feared God,—strict obedience is the fruit. "Whatsoever things are just" must be combined with "whatsoever things are lovely."

They who are treated as just through the imputation of the merits of Jesus Christ the Righteous, and who are made just by the Spirit of the "Holy One and Just," will aspire to all cognate virtues. Because there is "no more condemnation, they walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." They will emulate that which is congenial. They will do justice and love mercy. They will walk honestly. They will be without rebuke. They will give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. They will love their neighbour as themselves. Their ways are equal. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous."

Theirs is the true sense of *right*. They ask no lower question, they allow no meaner standard. A conventional morality they abjure. They ascribe righteousness to their Maker. They copy it as it is reflected in his will. It is their only rule. They are upright in heart. They walk uprightly.

Theirs is the constant care of *duty*. Instead of evading, compromising, modifying, it, that which binds them to the will of God their Saviour is their conscious liberty and confessed delight. They seek to know it. They do it from the heart. They are the undefiled in the way.

Theirs is the firm habit of *fidelity*. They are the representatives of those for whom they should act, and the almoners for those from whom they must not withhold. Talents are deposited with them which they must improve. Mighty are their trusts. They occupy. As stewards they are found faithful.

How is holiness, the true rectitude, now beheld, enjoyed, realised by those saints! How it shines out before them! How it is reflected from them! "Judgment shall return to righteousness: and all the upright in heart shall follow it."

It is a solemn thought, and deeply ought we to be affected by it, that the "perfection" of which this passage speaks is alone the portion of the "just." It is equally solemn, and ought not only to affect but to stimulate us, that only can we acquire on earth the acceptance and regeneration which complete this state and character. It is on this side of eternity that the act of justification and the work of sanctification must be realised. Hope not to find them beyond. That awful boundary past,—"He that is unjust, let him be unjust still!"

II. These "just men" are not any longer in our present sphere, or kind, of existence. We are summoned to meditate them in a new condition. The image of the earth is effaced. They are no more seen in a compound nature. They are "spirits." All beside is left in the grave. Nothing material cleaves to them. But it is the higher essence,—the intellection,—the consciousness,—the self,—which this disembodiment must suppose. What is their relationship to space, how these spirits can without organisms interchange sentiments and affections, we cannot resolve. All of subsisting life, all of actual perception, all of capacity to feel, all of power to act is confined to the soul. Its body is removed from any possible influence. If that frame have some identifying mark, some rallying particle, some nucleus, anatomy has

not detected it. It is as if cast away. It goes back into certain original elements. We have exclusively to dwell upon the spiritualism of the just.

We are prepared to find in the destinies of different orders of spirit the widest distinctions. Spirit is in the reptile, and spirit is in the man. The first variety is a guide to certain effects. It cannot receive religious ideas, it cannot entertain conscientious impressions, it makes no progress from age to age. Yet it is mind: it remembers, it wills. Animal life could not act in the absence of mind. Who can think it immortal? The second is a guide, but far more variable in its phænomena. Its results cannot be predicted. It constantly enlarges itself. As found in the species, it is ever in progress. It cannot, without the most unnatural effort, dismiss the evidences of a First Cause and the consciousness of moral accountability. Who can think it anything but immortal? "Who knoweth the spirit of man that goeth upward? and the spirit of the beast that goeth downward to the earth?" Such are the plain distinctions, whatever they mean. The human spirit separates from the body, departs, ascends, "we fly away:" the animal spirit, inseparable from organised life, sinks with the carcase into the ground. The dissolution of the man consists in this disintegration: "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall ascend to God who gave it."

The doctrine of homogeneousness,—of one, unmixed, nature,—finds no favour in Holy Writ. Whatever a few speculative writers would say on the side of idealism,—if the nature of man be in every thing identical, or, more properly speaking, if his composition be uniform and indivisible, he is simply a material being. Materialism cannot, on the admission of the premisses, be refused. Then life and intelligence are not *additions* to a frame prepared for them, but the results of its organization. They do

not govern the bodily machine, but are the effects of its mechanism. The Scripture decides it very differently. It speaks of man's formation, when into the insensate mass the breath of the Almighty inspired the living soul and understanding. It proclaims that there is a spirit in man. It honours the Creator as the God of the spirits of all men, as the Father of spirits. Does it flatter the outward frame as the generating cause of all mental operations? Its thought is ever of the inner man. It tells us that the spirit of man is the candle of the Lord. It supposes that the man may be "in the body or out of the body." And whence is this debasing doctrine of our unitive nature proved? Was it preached at the Bush of Midian? "I am the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live to him." Was it published from the Cross? "Verily I say unto thee, To-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise." Did it cheer the protomartyr? "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Did it animate the Apostle of the Gentiles? "Having a desire to depart and to be with Christ which is far better." Did it resound in the voice from heaven which the Beloved Disciple heard in Patmos? "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth." *Parable* testifies the same truth. The rich man is buried and lifts up his eyes in hell. The beggar dies, and angels carry him to his reward. *Vision* unfolds the same fact, and we behold the redeemed, with their palms and their crowns, now standing before the throne.

As little does Materialism find support in our observation of those conditions to which it commonly appeals. The bodily structure is for the present the instrument and habitation of the soul. There is a mysterious sympathy between them. It is not denied that both may feel the alternate influence. The mind may weary the body, the body may obscure the mind. The soul may "o'er

inform its tenement," its tenement may dim and hamper the soul. But there is one event, of frequent recurrence, which cannot be overlooked, conveying an argument which cannot be withstood. The Christian lies upon his death-bed. His corporeal part is shattered, emaciated, wrung. The entire frame has sunk in all its springs and is wrecked in all its powers. His mind, however, is unimpaired in its vigour and unshaken in its faith. It never so rose, it never so triumphed, until now. It flashes forth, not as an expiring taper but as a precious gem from which the last incrustation is almost cleared away. It is in the crisis of its history. It is its eve of highest attainment and richest hope. It is the laying hold of its true fruitions. It is not so much death as its opening life. It is the date of its immortality. And can it be that the spirit, thus touched into unearthly beauty, wrought into divine mood, suddenly perishes? That it sobs away with the breath of its dying song? That it congeals with the chill of its fainting heart? Is this greatness the precursor of nothing? Is this outbeaming but the token of sudden night? Were this to be supposed, the soul would be adorned only as a victim for the sacrifice,—or resemble a spoil which was enriched, a trophy which was glorified, only to fall into the victorious hand of the King of terrors and to signalise his conquest!

It is not our vain attempt to prove, but simply to unfold, the doctrine of Scripture upon this withdrawment of the soul at death. It is a pure question of Revelation. With only one bearing of the question have we to do,—its reference to the saint.

Now all we know of death is this: that it has power over the body. It destroys its sensation and causes it to decay. We know, indeed, that it has power over the spirit. But we possess not more than presumptive evidence of its effect. Does it extinguish, or does it only detach? Divine discovery relieves our suspense. The

soul goes forth. It partakes not of the ruin of the body, but emerges from it. There is a receptacle fitted to receive it. There is a place of refuge. It can exist and act separately. But such existence and action are necessarily modified. It is vital and active, but in new conditions. The body is not any longer its vehicle or its mirror. It is diverted and absorbed in itself. It is unhurt by death. Nothing of its own, proper, nature is changed. It awaits the resurrection of the body, but the interval is that of spiritual delight. And while the direct testimony is strong, the incidental may be selected as that which is more commonly overlooked and which is not the less conclusive.

And thus do we find that Paul resigns himself without fear of this contingence,—he knew that his soul, whithersoever transported, must be safe. "Nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him *against that day*." He abandons it with unfaltering confidence to the Saviour, as a deposit in his charge, a pawn which he securely guards. "That day" is distant, but "against" its glory in the resurrection of the dead, the soul shall be found already prepared in its holiness and joy.

It is a general truth, though particularly applied, "He that is dead is freed from sin." * Is this spoken of the torpidity of the body? Is it not the exemption of the soul?

The holy defiance, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" The triumphant boast,—in the sight of all the evils which threaten life,—"I am persuaded that neither death, nor things to come, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord,"—seem to lose not only their force but their meaning, if there survive no intelligent object of this love. Peril and sword, death and things to come, have separated,

* Rom. vi. 7.

by suspending all exercise, all consciousness, all reaction, of that love.

Heaven is, therefore, set forth as a present state, upon which our mind should rest. "*While* we look at the things which are not seen." "We *have* a building of God." "Now he that *hath* wrought us for the self-same thing is God." "The saints *are* in light." "To give you an inheritance among all them which *are* sanctified." "For now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he *hath* prepared for them a city."

"Christ is Lord both of the dead and living." "If we die, we die unto the Lord." * Such dominion is not of our mouldering remains. Such surrender is not to the behest that we must die. We see in it the sovereignty over departed spirits, spirits which have commended themselves to his eternal service.

"For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him." These having, therefore, in their spiritual part been always, since their death, in the divine presence, the beatific vision,—their souls having through that interval been with God,—He will bring them with him, in his train: he will come with all these saints, to meet and inherit their long vacated forms.

On any other showing, we see not how "he that believeth" on Jesus "hath everlasting life," how our "life is hid with Christ in God," how there is "given to us everlasting consolation," how "eternal life abideth in us," how our "repentance is unto life," how we "believe to life everlasting," how we can "lay hold on eternal life," how we can "labour for the meat which endureth unto everlasting life," how he that "hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal." Nor are those statements intelligible which assure us that Christ has "abolished

* Rom. xiv. 8, 9.

death," that "whosoever liveth, and believeth in him, shall never die," that he is "passed from death unto life," that "he shall not see death," that "he shall not taste death," that he who shall "eat of the bread which cometh down from heaven shall not die." If the holy life of the soul be perpetuated in the deathlessness of that soul, then is there this unbroken blessing, this uninterrupted life: if merely the body temporarily dissolves and the soul triumphs uninjured, then the bitterness of death is past, and, its power of evil being so abated, it may be considered as all but annulled. But bear these sayings in your mind,—then think of the long night of death shrouding soul as well as flesh,—the unreflection, the insensibility, the decomposition, which mighty ages prolong and seal,—and then pronounce whether such sayings admit of sober construction or fall within unprevaricating truth?

The promises and exhortations which are directed to Christians, suppose the immediateness of their reward. "That we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God." These imagined not the dreary, lingering, delay. Nor did they prove it. "These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." The "hope set before us" is not remote and intangible, but "the anchor of the soul, sure and steadfast, which entereth into that within the veil." "Knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance." "For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise." "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." "That when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations."

The Offices of Christ secure this instantaneous joy to his people. He is their head,—they must live. He has the power of an endless life in his capacity of Priest,—he ministers for living votaries. He is the Life,—because he lives, we shall live also. He is the Pattern of our death,—we cannot be planted in the likeness of his death if our soul go not into spiritual separation. He is the Forerunner,—it must be now of the perfected soul as it shall be of the recovered body. "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls."

And still these implicit authorities multiply upon us. "For, for this cause was the gospel preached also to them that are dead (that is, during the life of those who now are dead) that though they might be condemned according to human opinion as to the flesh, they might live according to God," by his favour and support, "in the spirit."* "Wherefore the rather give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall, for so shall an entrance be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ." "Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy." "I will give him the morning star." "I will not blot out his name out of the book of life." "Be thou faithful unto the death, and I will give thee a crown of life." "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of Hades and of death." Is not the evidence of these passages strong, in the quiet assurance which they suppose, that there is no interval nor break between the promise and the fulfilment?

We can hold no sympathy with the quibble, that if we

* 1 Pet. iv. 6.

continue under the influence of death until the resurrection, it being an unconscious interval, it can be no loss. Men might, in the same manner, reconcile themselves to annihilation. It *is* abridgment, real and serious, of the highest enjoyment. It is the abandonment of a true immortality; for it is lost, however ultimately renewed. It impairs, of necessity, the motive which arises from undelayed retribution. It lowers every conception of the soul, when it is represented as capable of this suspension of its powers. It virtually dislocates our being, destroys its continuity, and places us in sections of existence which must be felt as little related to each other. It is a pause which slackens hope and fear. It is a debasement of our being.

But it need not be feared. The characters, with which the believer is arrayed, forbid it. Not thus shall they whom Christ has made kings and priests unto God,—not thus shall the joint-heirs with Jesus Christ,—not thus shall the members of his body, of his flesh and of his bones,—not thus shall they who can never perish,—not thus shall they whom none can pluck from the Shepherd's hands,—be banished from the light of life, or be expelled from the irradiation of divinity, in the cold, dark, silent, tomb. "Father, I will that they, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory!"

The sundering of the body and the soul, in the death of the Christian, is not a good in itself. It is a consequence of sin. It is a new arrangement. It involves serious detriment and deprivation. It is an unnatural position for both. But it was always possible, considering the independent qualities of the spiritual part. It is an integer, though united to another order of existence. The Mercy of God our Saviour has converted this change into a present law. It is not, however, to be perpetual. All things are to be restored. The arrangement only subsists temporarily, incidentally, and for intermediate designs.

Still it is an arrangement of the greatest comparative good. The corporeity of the human system, in its present circumstances, is the occasion of frequent sin and the subject of frequent affliction. Often does it oppress the soul. Its appetites tend to an evil excess. Its instincts clamour for a tyrannic ascendency. Release from it, while it thus inclines to the sensual and worldly, while it thus provokes temptation as well as suffers it, while it is thus consumed by disease and agony, is surely what is devoutly to be wished. It is a disenthralment, as we are now placed. It is not desirable for ends like these alone. It is a preliminary in a great transition. It must be passed, or the final stage cannot be attained. We must be disembodied that we may rise again. How may this state of spiritualism be conceived?

It is described as subsisting in intimate union with the Saviour. It is to "depart and to be with Christ." It is to "be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord." They who have entered on its state are "the dead in Christ;" for though their souls are in him, still those souls would not be separate but for death. Their souls are under its influence as much as their bodies, although the effects of that influence are not the same. He "receives" them. This is the great distinctiveness of their present condition. Their inward nature, drawn forth from the outward, is in a relationship, in an access to the Blessed Redeemer far different from any enjoyment of his presence, or communion with his person, known on earth.

In addition to this immediate presence of the Redeemer-God, that light in which they see light, the light of the Lamb,—the spirits of just men are "*made perfect.*" This is a discovery of their state which greatly explains itself. The spirit is matured in its powers and consummated in its joys. According to its capacities it is complete. All its true aims are unfolded. It is wrought out into its

fullest development. The body did assist it on earth: the raised body shall far more assist it in heaven. But so far as its simple nature is concerned, it is advanced and magnified. Self-contradictory is, therefore, every opinion which describes the departed soul as dreaming its thoughts,—which represents those thoughts as vague and undefined. It is a condition of pure spiritualism. Certain facts suggest themselves as the necessary accompaniments of such a condition.

The Consciousness must be very distinct. Amidst the distraction of worldly care, it is too common and too easy to lose the remembrance of that solemn individualization in which each spirit is condensed. We are often reluctant to feel what we truly are. But the influence of religion induces us to "commune with our own heart," and impels our "spirit to make diligent search." We recollect ourselves. It is not without stern effort that we can succeed. But the "spirit made perfect" can know no dissipating nor forgetful mood. It loses not itself. The Self revolves upon its own centre, ever substantiating what it really is, ever enjoying its proper exercises of understanding and emotion. This "hidden man" lives in his own light. Nothing is attached to the spirit which can divert this concentrated impression.

The Inward Life must be very strong. The Christian's introverted mind, self-contemplative, not only expatiates through itself, its reflections and motives,—it contains a habit of thought and feeling, arising from its regeneration, which constitutes it diverse from all others and from its former self. This is a life now commenced. "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God." It is the œconomy of peculiar tastes and principles. "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of our spirit." This is the eternal life of the soul, which is quite distinct from its immortality. It is now often im-

peded, shaken, and brought low. It is ready to die. But the "spirit made perfect" is vigorous in it. Nothing can suspend, mar, weaken, it. The whole soul, all that is within it, is absorbed in that deep and holy sense.

The Intellectual Faculty must be very clear. Many barriers resisted, many burdens oppressed, many clouds obscured, the exercise of the mental powers while they were found in an earthly and embodied state. The soul is enfeebled by darkened organs, and depressed by diseased structures. Itself may be the subject of malady and infirmity. Here is, likewise, much to interrupt its studies and its exercises. But the "spirit made perfect" must be freed from all these impediments. Nothing can restrict its freedom or impair its judgment or exhaust its activity. The eye of its understanding never wearies nor shuts. It finds every object kindred to itself. Nor are we to divide the soul from its proper affections. It feels the love of the truth. It delights itself in infinite excellence. It ranges among the eternal ideas, the archetypes, of the divine beauty. It still "follows on to know the Lord," it still "follows hard after God."

The Meditative Abstraction must be very intent. The world is now a noisy intruder on our quiet and retirement. Even when we can find the cell whence its violence is excluded, its love and snare and fable may pursue us still. Nor is this fixed musing always at command. We cannot at will withdraw ourselves into the hiding-places of the spirit, nor obey the visions which stream around us there. The world is in our heart. Evil is present with us. Our thoughts wander. Our passions rebel. But the "spirit made perfect" possesses control the most undisputed over all its operations. The outward scene and sense can no more distract it. It is rapt into the deep things of God. It turns not aside. Its heaven of contemplation no tempest can shake and no cloud can dim. What themes does it find for itself! How is it smitten by their loveliness and overwhelmed by their grandeur!

The Adoring Gratitude must be very earnest. It bears with it the principal effects of salvation. It is pardoned, received, sanctified, adopted. When we read,—"Whom He called, them he also justified; and whom he justified, them he also glorified,"—the series of blessings cannot suppose that the last is delayed until the resurrection. They are consecutive and admit not of disjunction. "The Lord will give grace and glory." It is there "glorified." It knows that its salvation is of the Lord. To feel that it is "made perfect," is to appreciate a deliverance the most stupendous. The Christian upon earth is often amazed at "what the Lord hath done for his soul." He cannot conceal the wondrous tale. But here every result is partial and immature. *There* all is known and understood. There nothing can arise to hide the full glory from the spirit. "The salvation of the soul" is already achieved,—the far greater achievement: the reversion shall not be long withheld. The spirit has now a harp, it has now a crown,—with these it warbles thanksgiving, and renders homage, even now, before the throne!

Its Awaiting Aspiration must be very glad. The disembodied saint ascertains the future stage to which it constantly approaches, which is the last of all, and which is only wanted to complete his entire being. He understands its nature. He is assured of its certainty. Doubt and impatience cannot have place in such a spirit. What is the charm of this sweet hope! What must be the ecstacy of this blessed anticipation! Weariness and suspense belong to mortals; but "spirits made perfect" sign not their desires, nor "groan within themselves,—waiting for the adoption, even the redemption of the body." Calmly and intently they see it, though from afar: and possess in their own "perfection," the handsel and earnest of the glorious resurrection of their flesh and of their reunion with it!

It is obvious, then, that there is, as to our spiritual existence in heaven, whatever is refined, full, intense. It

is spirit in its perfection. But it endures a certain restriction. It is at present denied that organism which would connect it with that which is external. We are not permitted to suppose that it has sympathy with that which subsists beyond itself. Its life is not of fellowship, activity, and consummation. Yet it is not, therefore, self-concentrated. It retains and cherishes all its powers and affections, all its remembrances and hopes. It is lost to nothing. But with the outward it holds no communication. That cannot impress it. There is no common ground on which mind and externalism can meet. There is no medium of such perception. And still is there possible limit to this obvious truth. For spirits may enjoy intercourse with each other according to certain laws which we do not comprehend.

They, however, who see that the "perfect spirit" cannot, in virtue of that perfection, be interested in that which is without, suppose that it is clothed with a temporary, material, vehicle, giving it all the inlets of sensation. This is theory. It is addition to the simple account that "the spirits of just men are made perfect." But let us look at the hypothesis. If the spirit assume such form, that form is a new creation. It is as real an existence, and it is at least as complete an organization, as the present body. But if the body has been long worn by us, this has been worn by millions in heaven far longer. If the body be endeared to us because of its long companionship, this would be much more endeared. How can we part with this configuration, which never gave us pain nor brought us evil, to resume that body which entailed upon us both? What would be the fate of such a sensible frame? Must it die? Must it be annihilated? Difficulties crowd upon us,—we feel that such a course can never be. The Resurrection is always described as an immense acquisition. But were this hypothesis true, it would be nothing more,—though a greater act of *redemption*,—than

the spirit had enjoyed with its new envelopment and perceptiveness through all the interval until the dead were raised.

Oh, the transition, the passage, of the spirit, escaped from earth, released from mortality, to this glorious state! It is freed from sin. It is delivered from suffering. It flies upward to its proper sphere. Spirit!—which hast long walked in darkness, brooded in sorrow, pined in weariness,—spirit! which wast long tossed with tempest, harassed by hostility, vexed with care,—spirit! which didst long groan within thyself,—spirit! long bound to sense and chained to infirmity,—spirit! long lacerated and bruised with inward wounds,—spirit! the shadow of whose guilt hitherto lay upon thee though forgiven, the effort of whose depravity until now struggled in thee though subdued,—Christian soul depart! Go forth to rest and home! It is prepared for thee! It is not darkness, thou shalt see a great light! It is not void, thou shalt prove a rich fruition! It is not solitude, it is thronged with kindred minds! It is not vision, it is vivified with glorious realities! Thou shalt not be found destitute nor naked! There is a crown of life for thee, though it is not studded with all its gems! There is a robe made white for thee, though it is not covered with all its ornaments! There is a harp of sweet sound attuned for thee, though it is not strung with all its wires! Let not fears be in thy way! Trust to Him who calleth for thee! He bids thee come! It is the path of life! Thou art treading the way everlasting! Thou art safe! Thy journey is sped! Well done, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!

And oh, the immediateness of this joy! There is not a computable point of time. It is not a sand-fall. It is scarcely the twinkling of an eye. There lies my friend. He hastens to depart. Death is upon him. The change has well-nigh come. How little intervenes between his present humiliations and his awaiting glories! I tremble

to think what in an instant he must be! How unlike all he was! How extreme to all he is! I bend over thee, and mark thy wasted, pallid, frame,—I look up, and there is ascending above me an angel's form! I stoop to thee, and just can catch thy feeble, gasping, whisper.—I listen, and there floats around me a seraph's song! I take thy hand, tremulous and cold,—it is waving to me from yonder skies! I wipe thy brow, damp and furrowed,—it is enwreathed with the garland of victory! I slake thy lip, bloodless and parched,—it is drinking the living fountains, the overflowing springs, of heaven!

III. These separated spirits are represented to us as in a state of exalted advancement, depending upon their disembodiment.

This doctrine of immediate happiness was not entirely concealed from the ancient saints. Their language occasionally leads us to think that they had some conception of it. Yet every passage of Scripture, which has been cited, may not be found strictly to apply. "Thou wilt not leave my soul in the invisible world," * said David, but it was when "in spirit" he spoke of his distant Son. "And afterward Thou wilt receive me to glory," cried Asaph, but the word does not compel the strictly consecutive idea. † The truth seems more clear in the following expressions. "God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me." ‡ "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness." § In both these passages there is an intimation of a higher nature, that which is "redeemed," and which can be "received:" that which is detached from what "rests in its bed," and which can be actively "upright" still. Yet as a solacing support it was scarcely discovered even by "prophets and righteous men:" feebly was it enjoyed. The grave to them was dark. Jesus had

* Psa. xvi. 10.
† Psa. lxxiii. 24. אחר.
‡ Psa. xlix. 15.
§ Isa. lvii. 2.

not lain in it. They shrunk from death as from a suspension of their powers and joys. Bereavement smote them as an irremediable woe. "Lest I be like those that go down into the pit." "The dead praise not the Lord, neither any that go down into silence." "Spare me a little longer, before I go hence and be no more." "They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth."

And had they known the receptacle of departed spirits, it ought not to have inspired the delightful hopes we cherish. It was doubtless a sphere of spiritual bliss. It was Abraham's bosom. It was "under the earth." The divine presence was intimately vouchsafed. The higher advantages of the Christian œconomy were gladly awaited. It was a heaven: but it was not the proper heaven. It was not the dwelling of the Deity. Enoch and Elijah were not in it. They were taken to God. Christ was not then incarnate nor offered up: consequently he was not there. We think that we but follow the light of Scripture, confessedly feeble as to this intimation, in maintaining that these spirits, held until then in a nether and unequal heaven, ascended with Christ to heaven proper and exalted, to the heaven which he now inhabits, though not necessarily the final heaven. It is fitted for materialism, because the persons of the Antediluvian saint and the Tishbite prophet have their abode in it: most of all, because the glorified humanity of Jesus distinguishes and identifies it. It is, at least, all that spirits need. Who would now speak of it as Abraham's bosom? It is not the same in region or in state, as that to which the souls of the ancient righteous were borne. It is surely reasonable to think that, while all is advanced by Christianity on earth, there is corresponding advancement in all which it so entirely affects beyond these earthly bounds. If there be more bliss here, the bliss of other worlds must be augmented. What, then, is the testimony of Scripture? "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-

fruits of them that *slept.*" It is an action upon the past; it is a benefit to the *former* dead; *they* owe to his resurrection a most important change.—"Thou hast ascended on high: thou hast led *captivity captive.*" It is untrue in fact, and incorrect in figure, that such language of triumph intends the dragging of *enemies* as at his chariot wheels. How can we interpret *captivity* into the power of making *captive?* It is a subjective thing. It may be asked, in reply, How can we take captive such passive captivity? We offer the following historic illustrations. When Chedorlaomer despoiled the cities of the plain, Lot was "taken captive." Abraham "armed his trained servants," pursued and smote the enemy, and "brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot." Here was re-capture. Captivity was led captive, or the "captivity was turned again." Held of the foe, the captives seem assailed, but it is in kindness and for rescue. Though they appear to suffer a second captivity, it is at the hands of their deliverers and friends. It is not their discomfiture, but their enfranchisement.—When Ziklag was burned and sacked by the Amalekites, they "took the women captive and carried them away." Ahinoam and Abigail were among them. David, at the bidding of the Ephod, pursued the robbers, "recovered all that they had taken away and rescued his two wives." This was recapture. They who were torn away from home and liege, are snatched from their abductors, and the "captivity" is "led captive." It is a new seizure, but it is from the grasp of the foe.—When, in the ode of Deborah, she sings: "Arise, Barak, and lead thy captivity captive," the appeal supposes that he had broken the chains of his people, whom "the Lord had *sold* into the hand of Jabin, king of Canaan." Let these illustrations be now applied. Departed souls were in a captivity. Death had disunited them from the body. Though their captivity was made happy, it was estrangement. They were not on earth. They were not in heaven. Though

their circumstances were overruled for their blessedness, the circumstances themselves did not tend to it. They were children of a captivity, or a throng of spirits over which death yet exercised a disadvantageous and fearful influence.* Christ was the Conqueror. "He spoiled principalities and powers." Of Him it was declared that he should "swallow up death in victory." He ascends! He is "received up into glory!" There are not only the angels and the chariots in their thousands of thousands, —there is another train! All holy spirits follow Him who had appeared a spirit to them in their place of keeping. They now forsake that place for "things above." They are "led" by their Deliverer as a once captive-band, (though made glad in spite of such bondage by Him who only suffered their detention with a view to their ultimate release) and this procession, albeit "a captivity," is not one of prisoners, but of the enlarged and disenthralled. They rejoice in the triumph. They partake of the victory. It is their jubilee. They are the liberated, the ransomed, and the redeemed. "As He spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: that we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us."—And, therefore, it is said in the text: "Ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect." But this is asserted as a privilege unknown before. It arises from the new covenant in contradistinction from the old. It is explained: "God having provided some better things for us," (than for those who died before the rising of Christ) "that they without us" (without living until our time and under our dispensation) "should not be *made perfect.*" But they are *now made perfect,* in common with us. This "perfection" is bestowed upon all past, as well as for all future, time, and "ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect!"

It is thus that we shall experience the very changes which

* The "Limbus patrum" seems not an inapt representation.

the Lord of the dead and of the living bore: He died, his spirit went from him, it sojourned in the abode where the purest spirits called from earth alone could dwell, he rose bodily, his whole manhood was completed in that event, he ascended, and when he had thus "overcome the sharpness of death, he opened the kingdom of heaven for all believers."* "Every one that is perfect shall be as his Master."

Perfection is either an absolute, or a relative, term. In God it inheres most necessarily. In that sense He is alone. In the creature it can only subsist dependently and finitely. God may be magnified, but it is only by being more and more revealed. The goodness of the creature is derived and limited. It admits of perpetual increase. His progression is essential to his happiness. Were his perfection fixed, — had he attained a point beyond which he could advance no further, know nothing clearer, and enjoy nothing better, he would be the most wretched of beings. The measure of his actual acquirements would embitter the conviction that he had reached the last. Immortality could only be the bane and burden of a being to whom all development was denied, and to whom all improvement was impossible. What would such an arrest upon our faculties be even now? Who can conceive its misery? What would it be, if we were thus restricted, ever thrown back upon ourselves, with no new experience, with no expanding prospect, through eternal ages? What thought could conceive, what word could tell, that horrible weariness?

The perfection of the human spirit in heaven, being always progressive, must be intelligent. It is not a something superinduced upon it, but its own voluntary evolution. It is still the creature of reason and motive. Its perfection may, then, be considered in certain features and indications.

* Quoted from that noble Hymn, The "Te Deum."

1. The spirits of just men will be made perfect in *holiness.* Much of their present sanctification consists in the discovery of the evil which is in them, in the humility which this produces, in the devotion which seeks constant deliverance from infirmity and sin. It has been the uniform acknowledgment of the most holy men, how frequently they transgressed, how the corrupt principle contended in them, how distant they felt themselves from the standard which still they sought. Job "abhors himself." Isaiah bewails, "I am a man of unclean lips." Daniel bows in "shame and confusion of face." Peter recoils from the sudden impression of a contact to the infinite Purity: "Depart from me, for I am an evil man, O Lord." Paul, in his self-survey, is filled with loathing emotions and deprecatory cries: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death!" Sin dwelt in them, though it did not reign, and though it had no dominion. They desired heaven for this perfection. The "church, which Christ has loved," shall there be "holy and without blemish." "Every man" shall be "presented perfect in Christ Jesus." "They stand without fault before the throne of God." Oh what a transformation is this! Here the path of the just was as the shining light, there it is the perfect day! Here was the infancy and immaturity, there is the perfect man! To be known as holy where all is holy! To be acknowledged as faultless where all is faultless! Not only to be unblamed, but "unblameable:" not only unreproved, but "unreproveable!" To be "without spot!" To be the soul made taintless, perfect in its entire development of capacity for endless purity!

2. Such spirits are raised to the perfection of *wisdom.* The reason of the darkness which is in us, may be traced to our seeing truth in broken parts and through false mediums. No complete system is presented, and even were it, such system could not be fully contemplated.

Our state of mind is the principal cause. We misconceive. We think in prejudice. In vain the fairest star shines in the firmament, if the lens, which brings it near, be flawed. The distortion of the instrument lends itself to the disk of that orb and is painted on its reflection. "Now we know in part, and prophesy in part." But when all is consistent and sequent in the revelations afforded to us, when our minds expand in strictest accordance to the themes and facts thus revealed, then, at every given instant, we shall be perfected in knowledge. The matter of it will be perfectly formed, the perception of it will be perfectly distinct. Nothing will be so unknown as to constitute a pain or a mistake. Nothing will be so regarded as to be a confusion or a perplexity. "When that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part shall be done away."

3. These souls of the departed are perfectly *secure*. Angels were not, at their first creation, placed beyond the possibility of danger. They might be tempted: many of them fell. They kept not their high estate. Our original parents, made upright, soon yielded to the device of Satan, and were "in the transgression." They were driven forth from their bowers of purity and delight. Just men, through the recovering grace of God, are now found on earth. Yet how are they perilèd! What inward tendencies do they deplore! What worldly allurements must they withstand! "A just man falleth seven times." But in heaven there is no need of watch against hostility, or of resistance against sin. The warfare is accomplished. They have passed from probation. They have overcome. "They shall in no wise enter in it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie." They are sanctified in a manner, and to a degree, which renders them incapable of declension and relapse. All of that work is, doubtless, intelligent and voluntary. But it is distinguished from its present mode. Now it is

evolved only from within, to that which is uncongenial without: then it shall be reacted from all that is corresponding without, upon the principle, the kingdom of heaven, the seed of God, within. They cannot sin; not held back from it by any coercion, but by a similar necessity and law as that which governs the Divine Nature. It cannot be tempted: evil cannot dwell with it. That is the *essential* property of Deity: something of the same, as far as it can be, he communicates to the spirits of just men made perfect. He is surely able to make them stand. He can keep them from falling. They shall "go no more out."

4. A fulness of *beatitude* must be contained in their perfection. The holiness, wisdom, and stability, which we have seen attached to these spirits of the just, which we have seen inhering in their very essence, must prepare us to expect the boundlessness of their joy. They can know no want: yet are they full of holy desires, ever waking only to be satisfied, ever longing only to be fulfilled. The vessel at each moment overflows: but at every moment it also is enlarged. There are pleasures for evermore. The source of all is in the Infinite Plenitude. The river of life proceedeth out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. They have already, in their justification and sanctification, received the "abundance of life." Its capacities and its desires are resistless. It now expands in its proper development. It is "life eternal." What can these spirits lack? "The Lord shall be thy everlasting light, and thy God thy glory."

Methinks the soul has just breathed itself away. It lingers for the instant to survey the frame which it deserts. 'Farewell, thou tenement of clay! Wondrously wast thou contrived for all the earthly uses to which I was ordained. Sin clave to me, and thou didst too eagerly lodge, and, in return, didst too readily provoke it. I felt thy weaknesses and pains. I was oppressed by thy

heaviness and waste. Often didst thou constrain me to evil and mock me with vanity. I escape from thee for an interval of spiritual perfection. Sink down into thy tomb. It is thy resting-place. Thou shalt there moulder on, awaiting thy glorious change. Hope shall keep its lamp within thy sepulchre. Thou art sleeping in Jesus. Thou art redeemed. Thou art not cast out in hate and shame. Thou dost lie in glory, in thine own house. Triumphantly shall I hail thee, as now with deepest tenderness I forsake thee. Companion from the first, how imperfect would be my present joy, but that I know our union is only suspended, and that we shall embrace again. My ecstatic consciousness tells me that I am perfect. Speedily thou shalt be perfect too. How shalt thou wake up thy glory in the Resurrection-song, and how shall thy now soaring spirit return to thee, informing all thy organs, dictating all thy activities,—thyself the flexile, ethereal, spiritual, body,—adapting thyself to the priest and the king who shall claim thee, even as the white ephod and the regal robe!'—Methinks that spirit is in heaven, 'It must be true! It can be only real! Imagination can paint no such dream! Phantasy can evoke no such vision! It is fulfilled! It has come to pass! Moment of joy which I often feared never could be mine! Scene of bliss which I often thought it would never be my rapture to attain! It is the country of the angels! It is the land where the King is seen in his beauty! I doubt no more! He is here! He stands forth from yonder sphere of light! It is the Crucified! These are his praises which resound on every side! I will sing them too! Let me press among those throngs! Let me mingle with those harpers! It is heaven! Heaven round about me! Heaven springing up within me! I would see Jesus! That one glance repays all my toils and pains! It is my Saviour! I will not let thee go! Thou hast made me full of joy with thy countenance!'

IV. There are relations which unite the just on earth, and the spirits of the just in heaven, notwithstanding the disparity of their respective conditions.

Certain affinities may be discovered between mind and mind in this world, which are not restricted to personal intercourse, which operate as in defiance of the laws of space. And the announcement of the Text is but the enlargement of such mental affinities. It is not said that we *shall come* to the spirits of just men made perfect, but that we *are*. This can be no romance nor poetry,—as when we speak of our departed friends,—that we converse with their ashes, that we commune with their shades, that we reciprocate with their emotions. Nothing conscious can pass between us. Interchange is closed. Our mutual sensibilities, we may suppose, are not diminished, but they find no point of contact nor medium of expression. But there is a relation clearly proved,—it is substantive, true, real.

1. There is *unity*. The Scripture seems anxious, in describing the people of God, to do away with any territorial idea. They are not to be surveyed or regarded otherwise than in their spiritual state. They are represented in many views which have no respect to place. Be they in heaven, or be they on earth, they are to be contemplated collectively, and as a whole. This is the Church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood, which Christ hath loved, and for which he has given Himself, for which he is head over all things, by which is to be made known unto the principalities and powers in the heavenly places the manifold wisdom of God, in which there is glory to God by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end. There is the one community, identical in every change, among every nation, at every æra. It is ever-existing. There may be few added to it, but it cannot suffer loss. It is unbroken, wheresoever its members may be found. Worlds may intersect them, but the

integrity of their association is not impaired. This character belongs to the Church as it is revealed to us. It may be seen in the rudest germ, in the violent transition, in the calmest rest, in the most fiery ordeal, and last of all, as "the glorious Church, having neither spot nor wrinkle, or any such thing." But it is still the furtherance and accomplishment of one design. It is bringing many sons unto glory. It is the redemption of the great multitude whom no man can number, of all nations, and kindreds, and peoples, and tongues. To impress upon our minds this unity of the Church, it is shadowed by various figures, all of which have respect to its indivisibility. It is a city, a corporate community, but all, who are enrolled in it, partake of common immunities, and are "fellow-citizens with the saints."—It is a household. It is a household of faith and of God. They of this household are all they who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. "Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named." Its distribution in these different abodes affects not its identity. It shall find even in heaven many mansions.—It is a Body. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." This, then, is no fiction nor ideal. It is based on our union with Christ. We are all one in Him. We are joined to the Lord, and are one spirit. It is, therefore, declared to have been the design of God in redemption, to bind, in communion and identification, all his people, however scattered abroad on earth, or however raised to the glories of a higher existence. "That in the dispensation of the fulness of times, He might gather together in one, all things in Christ, *both which are in heaven*, and *which are on earth*, even in Him." "And having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile," or to unite, "all things unto Himself; by Him, I say, *whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.*" These

are the links which separation cannot weaken, and which death cannot dissolve. "We are come to the spirits of just men made perfect."

2. There is *resemblance*. Heaven is doubtless a place. But we must rather conceive of it as a state of mind. The heaven of perfect spirits must be chiefly this. This state of mind,—far transcending all present attainment of knowledge, sanctity, and joy,—consists not in estrangement and extreme. It is not alien from what is now experienced. There is no principle, no companionship, no employment, no rapture, of that region, but has in the Christian on earth its foretaste and counterpart. He "hath the Father and the Son." "The Spirit dwelleth in Him." "He hath eternal life." He is a "partaker of the glory that shall be revealed." "He who hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit." "We have the first-fruits of the Spirit." "We rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." "We sit with Christ in the heavenly places." These are the elements of that heavenly perfection, the buddings and initials which are vouchsafed to them who are "made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light." And let us suppose the heavenly-minded Christian to be suddenly transported thither. What to him would be strictly new? What idea could any of those spirits entertain which he had not more feebly conceived? What strain could they celebrate which he had not more faintly sung? The heaven which he enters and enjoys is but the expansion of principles and emotions he long has known. He has been changed already into the image of the Divine glory, "from glory to glory!" He wanted but this consummation. The heaven was, ever since his regeneration, fast growing up within him, and it is now fulfilled. Therefore, as if analogous language shall be employed, these are the perfect on earth. They attain not to the degree of celestial perfec-

tion, but it is of the same kind and order. "Be perfect." "As many as are perfect." "Mark the perfect man, his end is peace." "Our love is made perfect." "The perfect heart." Surely this answers in its general character, though not in its measure, to that clear vision, to that uncorrupted righteousness, which distinguish the purely spiritual state. The last of dying triumph, and the first of empyrean rapture, may thus easily and naturally blend: and in the yearnings of a kindred mind, we now come to the spirits of just men made perfect. Do we not know it? Have we not found it? Are now our affections set on things above? Does not the holy city come down from God out of heaven? Is not our conversation in heaven? Do we not often leave the earth? Hold we not fellowship with departed spirits? Is the communion of saints debarred? Oh, we are one, in purpose, in joy, in desire, in adoration! This like-mindedness overcomes all interruptions, pervades the most opposite conditions, assimilates the farthest extremes, and binds in sympathy earth and heaven! They vibrate upon one centre? They resound with one Alleluia! They live in one light! We find the point of junction; how and where they touch! We learn the true congress of embodied and disembodied spirits, how and where they meet!

3. There is *endearment.* A holy affinity unites us to the spirits of just men made perfect. They are the Church of the first-born: they are our elder brethren. Our desire is to them. The inheritance shall be divided between us. The love of the brotherhood is the badge of all Christian profession. By this we are known as the disciples of Christ, in that we love one another. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. This is the true unity of the followers of the Saviour: they love each other in their common image, their like precious faith, their heavenly calling. The more distinguished in holiness, we love the

more. We mark them that walk so. They who are of note, they whose praise in the gospel is in all the churches, receive of us double honour. How does this principle of sacred affection, then, heighten, when it is directed to those perfected spirits! The ancient saints are there! We love them in their biography. Yet scarcely is there one who failed not even in his own exemplary virtue. Our sainted friends are there! We love them without dissimulation. Yet we only knew them amidst weakness and ignorance. Now is no more such failure. Now is no more such infirmity. Our love rises proportionately to them. When we seem to descry among the nations of the saved, those whom we have cherished,—when these stand forth from them, father, mother, brother, sister, the partners and children of our desolate households,—we feel a moral complacency in them, that destroys not tenderness, but which refines and sanctifies it,—that awakens awe, but which also softens and endears it. The love which once held us is strengthened, but it is woven of more solemn ties than before. We hail that cloud of witnesses. We go up and salute the church triumphant. We exercise not, however, an unreciprocated love. We know that we did possess it. We forget not our parting with them,—how their eye glazed as it rested fondly on us, how their trembling breath whispered still their undying attachment, how their hand grew cold and nerveless in our grasp. Have affections, which death could not chill, turned suddenly indifferent and unheeding? Are they weaned from us? Are we forgotten? Is all sympathy withdrawn? Hearts grow not selfish in heaven. It is the world of love. Friendships are treasured there. The saints, dwelling in it, are alive to all the interests of the church on earth. They take their part in the importunities for its avengement, and in the acclamations of its triumph. They look forward to "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints," and to "our gathering together to Him."

Spirits made perfect can abandon no love which it was ever their right to form, their duty to maintain, their benefit to exercise: their perfection is the pledge that each holy attachment is raised to that perfection.

4. There is *appropriation.* We already have obtained a portion in heaven. "Joint-heirs with Christ Jesus," he has claimed it for us. He is our Forerunner. "He has for us entered." He "*now* appears in the presence of God for us." We "come to the spirits of just men made perfect," for they inhabit our country, they dwell in our home. They have preceded us, but "things to come are ours," and their title is no surer than our own.

This is the test of our profession. Heaven is a scene of hallowed perfection. This is to be our reward. The righteousness of the saints completes their bliss. Is this the heaven after which we aspire? Do we feel that it is our choice? Is it our chief joy? Is it all our delight? Do the conception and the taste of this holiness form the primary and paramount element in all our representations and musings of heaven? Our case must be determined by this rule of judgment, "Marvel not,"—it is truly obvious, it is necessary inference,—"Ye must be born again." Ye who love sin and go on in your trespasses,—whose inward thought is very wickedness, how could you live in a holy world? What would you find of congenial delight in heaven? No sympathy could bind you to its joys and inhabitants: no sympathy could bind these to you. O sinner! Whom all the holy must shun! To whom the question must incessantly be borne,—How camest thou in hither? Those raptures thou couldst not share! Those songs thou couldst not repeat! In all that bliss thou couldst only find disgust. In all that harmony thou couldst only find dissonance. Strange to all, all would be strange to thee! And thou must wander a solitary wretch along those streets of gold and hills of light,

though surrounded by the vast multitudes of the redeemed! Ye must be born again!

This ought to be an incentive to our diligence. Is it for us to boast alliance with the spirits of just men made perfect? Are we come to them? Let us not shame them. Let us be followers of them. Let us manifest our oneness with them. Let us lift up the brow around which the light of immortality shall play. Let us stretch out our hands to heaven. Let us set our face thitherward. An impress must be upon us which nothing can conceal. Plainly must we show that we are hastening our way. What high models are these to study! What communications are these which we have one with another!

This will be the solace of our bereavements. Our friends disappear. But God hath prepared for them a glorious abode. They are not lost to us. We come to them. We once more join them. Would we recall them to sin and conflict and suffering? Would we drag them from their thrones? We will the rather rejoice in their exemption and loosening from temptation and pain. We will go to them, though they shall not return to us. There is an identity between all the redeemed which place and time cannot destroy. In their death they are not divided.

Ours is a world of death. All dies in it. It is full of graves and sepulchres, of mortal struggles and wrecks, of bitter partings and disseverments, of last looks and accents, of death-bed sobbing counsels and stifled farewells, as though it were one vast dying chamber, one vast burying-place! Families are rent. That which appeared a sure house quickly passes away. Lo, the fair contrast! In yonder world is the mighty throng of spirits perfect. What of worth and excellence does it not include? Who of the truly great and noble is not there? Haste to greet them! Go to them now.

Cultivate their familiarity. Bind up your best delights with them. Learn their purity. Antedate their bliss. Reflect their glory. Modulate your voice to their anthem. Throw your spirit into theirs, until their spirits inspire yours. Commune with them. Bring yourselves as within their sight and hearing. Claim their kindred. Call them brethren. Make them companions. Salute them with your love in Christ Jesus. And as ye are now in spiritual juxta-position to them, so approach them likewise, in holy resemblance and congenial service, until ye mingle with their multitude and fall into their embrace.

This is the issue which our Divine Lord contemplated when he prayed, interceding for all his disciples until the end of time, while Gethsemane lay at his feet, and Calvary rose upon his prospect: "*That they may be made perfect in one.*" The prayer has been answered, it is still answered, it shall be answered, until all its desire is fulfilled. They who are in heaven are made perfect. They who are on earth are come to them who are made perfect. All shall be made perfect, but, ere that can be, all now are one!

When the children of Israel entered Canaan, so great were their mustering numbers, that while column after column covered the shore of that promised land, thousands filled the channel of Jordan, and thousands more had not reached its brink. There were those who had attained their highest hope, those who trembled in the passage between the arrested billows of that river, and those who toiled still amidst the desert thorns and sands, not catching a view of that deliverance which was now begun. Yet was all assured. The most distant step was marching to victory and rest. Each tribe was in its place. The whole people was in progress. It was a uniform movement. It was an unbroken train. First and last, only sooner or later, were speeding to their country

of inheritance. Shout was prolonged by shout from those who were foremost and from those who were behind. It was one great armament impelled by a common spirit, throbbing with a common life. The triumph of every one momentarily advanced. "All passed clean over." So, Dear Christians, onward hasten the pilgrim saints of the Most High. Innumerable are the throngs which have found their way to heaven. An entrance has been ministered to them. At this hour many feel the pains of death. Jordan is driven back. What companies still crowd this desert-world, and shall increasingly crowd it, but all journeying to the same goodly place! "Now is their salvation nearer than when they believed." The glorified, the dying, the living,—they are marshalled into one procession, and constitute but one host. There is no interval nor interruption in their array. In mighty series they urge their course or find their rest. The gate of heaven is never shut. They who enter in, encourage those who follow them. The succession never fails. They come! They come! From the four corners of earth, from the four winds of heaven! The celestial conquerors bend from their thrones to meet them! And they who are still in this wilderness, with death between them and heaven, are not cut off from that congregated infinite,—"Ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect!"

SERMON XV.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE JUST.

PHIL. iii. 11.

IF BY ANY MEANS I MIGHT ATTAIN UNTO THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

No man could be more thoroughly convinced, more satisfactorily persuaded, more consciously assured, than was the Writer of these words, that the Christian is advanced to an exalted sphere of existence and to as exalted a condition of happiness, without delay or pause, at death. No sacred writer is so perspicuous in this statement, so weighty in this argument, so full and urgent in the illustration of this fact. To him the idea of death suggests no interruption of being. He sees in the event of mortal dissolution only that which is transitive expanding, and climacteric. The conception of life is raised in his mind to something more strict, intense, and perfect. "The *body* is *dead* because of sin; but the *spirit* is *life* because of righteousness." It is accession. The high purposes, meditated in its creation, are more maturely developed. The seed has germinated, the flower blows, the fruit is ripened. The precious principle is disencumbered of much hinderance and is concentrated into much power. "Mortality is swallowed up of life." It is liberation. "There is lifting up." The life of the spirit is wrought out. The soul is more like itself. PAUL will not endure the momentary suspicion that aught is lost or suspended,—

"to die is *gain*." "It is a faithful saying: for if we be dead with Him, we shall also live with him."

And he was wonderfully qualified, mightily warranted, to pronounce on themes like these. He had been caught up to the third heaven. He had gazed upon the immortals inhabiting those realms. He had mingled with "the souls under the altar." He had received dread proof that they who "have fallen asleep in Christ" have not "perished." He had expatiated among the scenes which surround them. He had dived into the depths which absorb them. He had listened to their accents. He had walked on high with spirits once in the flesh. We know not that there were any, whom he was suffered to discriminate among those crowds: if there were any whom he recognised, we know not who they were. He had heard the parting prayer of one: "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Was not that gentle, lovely, spirit made known to the converted persecutor whom it had already forgiven, and whose conversion was an answer to its prayer? Having beheld those glorious visions, he was forced back to earth. The glories of Paradise could not be uttered in other language than its own. He found it impossible to repeat those secrets. They were "unspeakable words." He was not so much forbidden to declare the revelations of his rapture, as that he found nothing common, between them and mortals, by which he could have been understood. But in no hesitating manner does he affirm that such region of blessedness exists. With no faltering jealousy does he reason concerning it. He calls it by its name. He assigns its supernal position. In this Epistle * he describes himself alternating between immediate reward and prolonged usefulness: "I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you." We cannot construe this language into any

* Chap. i. 23, 24.

meaning, if he were not convinced that he should be with Christ directly upon his death. If that felicity was delayed until the resurrection of the body, he would have incurred no abridgment of it however his life and labour might be perpetuated on earth. The suspense of his mind was whether he should be sooner, or later, with Christ: whether for the sake of others he should submit to the delay. In an awowal like this, we read his perfect confidence that death would bring him at once to the presence of his Lord.—In another Epistle * he describes the same fact with equal precision: "We are confident and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord." The separation of the soul from the body is marked as a desirable event, because its "absence" is compensated most transcendently by its "presence" in another state. It is evident that the points of time for the two consequences, in all common understanding, must be the same. An exact synchronism is supposed. Why otherwise should the first be borne, and the second be preferred?—It was doubtless he who thus addressed the Hebrew Christians: "Ye are come to the spirits of just men made perfect." "That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." † Every thing,—not to pursue the argument any farther,—in his writings and in his actions demonstrates, that this assurance fully possessed his mind, that it operated as a law upon his whole being and conduct; and that his faith, always clear and strong, peculiarly discerned, embraced, and clung to, this truth. We behold him, so to speak, invariably treading on the verge, the awful confines, of that spiritual abode, and all that is material, between him and it, seems but as the transparent curtain or the fleecy cloud. We witness his perfect conviction, like an intuition, that his spirit, in a moment, at

* 2 Cor. v. 8. † Heb. xii. 23, vi. 12.

a bound, would spring up, when death released him, to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Those blessed groups, those sumless multitudes, live to his eye. He suffers and toils and dies daily as in their animating presence, stretching out his hands to them and mingling his songs with theirs!

Yet knowing all this,—dwelling in the ecstacy of such a vision,—the heavenly Apostle sets his heart upon that which is ulterior and which could only be remote. He knew that the day of Christ was not at hand, and warned others against the strange conjecture. To his prophetic view not less than Thirty Ages stood up defined, illuminated, big with mighty events and issues, all which must intervene ere that consummation. During the whole interval, until "the time of the end," he would "be with Christ," basking in the light of the Godhead, mingled with the unfallen essences and the redeemed saints who are round about the throne. His body, which had so oft encumbered him with its weakness and infirmity, a body of sin, a body of death, a body which always made it possible that he should be a castaway, would have ceased to oppress his aspiration and endanger his safety. His piercing intelligence and ardent love would have found congenial companionship and scene. His warfare would be accomplished. He would have finished his course. What acclamations would have welcomed him! What a rest had remained for him! What a reward must he have found! But not slighting this, he postpones it. It does not satisfy him. It cannot engage the last effort, the utmost solicitude, of his soul. With a sublime impatience he outruns it. He pants with an ambition which this does not exhaust. He is fired with a zeal which this does not appease. THEN, when the dead shall rise up at the sound of the trumpet,—then, when the sleeping dust of the holy shall be reconstructed and resuscitated,—then, when the

body is given back to the spirit and the spirit to the body,—then only has he seized his aim, then only realised his triumph!

The language which he employs in the context is agonistic. "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus:" or, as the latter part of the quotation might be more correctly translated, "I press along the course unto the prize of God's calling by Christ Jesus from on high." It is His voice out of heaven to his people in their graves. It is His Resurrection-Summons. It is "the trump of God." This is the goal and guerdon. So the Patriarch exclaimed: "Thou shalt call, and I will answer thee: thou wilt have a desire to the work of thy hands."* Give the Apostle heaven itself without this,—robe and crown and mansion,—and he "counts not that he has apprehended" the full prize "for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus;" he feels himself far from his absolute inauguration of glory and gladness; "he has not already attained, neither is he already perfect." He will set none other bounds, he will brook none other limits, to his career than those which the Great Master has appointed, nor accept any inferior meed and diadem than that which He has proposed.

The Deduction is irresistible. What must be that sequel which can so fix, impress, and overwhelm, such a mind,—so stored with truth, so visited with illapse, so far-darting with revelations,—that, while an instantaneous heaven lies before it,—the spirit's rest and home!—it is carried over it, is transported beyond it,—as if it could not stay nor stoop its flight,—to more ample enjoyments, to more glowing splendours, to more illustrious dignities,—though that present heaven is so irradiated with beauty that we might imagine there could be no more matured

* Job. xiv. 15.

loveliness, though it is so glorious that heart cannot conceive how it should be lost in a glory which excelleth!

The Subject is most interesting. It has its proper place in the Christian theology. This place has, we think, been deprecated and dislodged. The neglect and removal have thrown other truths out of their proportion. Wild errors have risen up among us. Their antidote only can be found in consistent Christianity. The rank which it gives to the resurrection of the believer cannot be low and indifferent, provided that this language express its spirit and fulfil its purpose: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

I. WHAT IS THAT ENTIRE SATISFACTION AND CLIMAX FOR WHICH THE TEXT TEACHES US TO LONG AND LABOUR?

The doctrine of the Resurrection is proper to Scripture. The immortality of the soul was not unknown as an idea and a hope by the wiser and better Pagans. Even this was to them a broken, troubled, dream. But that the body should be restored, its structure reorganised, its identity preserved, was an imagining too bold for human thought in its most philosophical exercise. Poetry never fabled it among its sweetest inventions. The light which is set and clear in our firmament never glanced most fitfully, never gleamed most dimly, upon the heathen mind. The Epicurean and Stoick at Athens accounted the opinion not less strange than it would have seemed to any barbarous tribe.

But it is not only a doctrine peculiar to Scripture, it is reiterated by it. It is not the distinct discovery of Christianity. It is found in both Testaments. It is, however, by the latter more conspicuously made known. "Our Saviour Jesus Christ hath brought life and incorruption to light by the gospel:" that is, hath revealed to us both the life of the soul and the imperishableness of the body.

And it is the uniform statement, or supposition of

Scripture, that the resurrection of all shall be simultaneous. "And the many that sleep in the dust shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." "The hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation." "But this I confess, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, And have hope toward God, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust." It is but one event. "I know that he shall rise again in the *resurrection at the last day.*" "And this is the will of Him that sent me, that every one that seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will *raise him up at the last day.*" The one event is instantaneous,—"in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye."

Judgment, therefore, is always represented as immediately succeeding this universal resurrection. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations." Everlasting results ensue. "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to his works."

Yet it is not unnatural, that sometimes the common event of the resurrection should be specially regarded and personally applied. In the language of Paul to the Corinthians, it is argued in the case of believers from their union with Christ,—he therefore restricts himself to them, and mentions not the wicked who shall rise for reasons which are totally different. He knows that when he himself shall be raised, thousands may rise at his side who would that they might never have arisen,—a recall to

them of horror and despair,—and yet he seeks that by any means he may attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Our Lord proclaims this peculiarity of resurrection: "But they which shall be counted worthy to obtain the resurrection of the dead." Think of the opposite destiny of the righteous and wicked in that day, and you will see why that which is hailed by some is deprecated by others. It may be replied that this very writer has affirmed, that "the dead in Christ shall rise first."* First, in priority, of whom? Of those who have never died,—who "are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord,"—who shall not "sleep" but only "be changed." These shall not "prevent," or go to heaven before, the risen saints.—And in the Apocalypse we read: "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection." But that resurrection is not of bodies: it is that of "the *souls* of them who were beheaded for the witness of Jesus." Such a resurrection must be as mystical as is the necessary interpretation of the other symbols in this book. The idea is of a spiritual conflict. He who sat on the white horse hath overcome by the sharp sword which goeth out of his mouth. That this is not literal warfare, may be proved by the very image employed. It is His word. Error is overcome by truth. But the possibility of the recurrence of evil is not destroyed. Then suspended errors may revive. Ancient evils may be resuscitated. "The remnant," "the rest of the dead," are not seen for the "thousand years." Through this period the holy and the faithful live and reign. It is a long term of spiritual piety and of uncorrupted truth. The best annals of the church on earth are restored. Its martyrs and examples, in their devotedness, live again. This is the "first resurrection," having nothing to do with the renovation of the flesh, but formally opposed to it, divided from it by this millenium, and only another figure for that state of religion which

* 1 Thess. iv. 16.

the millenium popularly describes,—but no more sensible than was the prophet's vision of the dry bones, or the apostle's delineation of those whom, having been dead in sins, God hath quickened and raised together with Christ. So the Saviour said "Elias is come already:" it was not he but John who "came in his power and spirit." The mind of the holiest and best of the departed, shall be given back to our world. "Man lieth down, and riseth not: *till the heavens be no more*, they shall not awake, nor be raised out of their sleep."

We conclude that the writer of the Text desired but a share in the general resurrection, attended as that event would be, to him and all the people of God, with consequences of surpassing happiness and glory. "Hidden in the grave," he should then emerge as a conqueror and a king. It must be to him special as his character and reward. The act of rising again may be most fearful: it shall be followed with wide-spread consternation: "all kindreds of the earth shall wail." The wicked shall cry to the mountains and the rocks, Fall on us and hide us! It is, however, common only in the act,—the Great Division of man is then, for the first time, made known. The Resurrection is the harvest of both wheat and tares, but that the Husbandman may bind them in their respective sheaves and bundles! It is the gathering of both sheep and goats, but that the Shepherd may separate them one from another! To the unrighteous, it is a "leading forth with the workers of iniquity:" the righteous "look up, and lift up their heads: for their redemption draweth nigh."

Yet, searching into the experience of present Christians, wo do not find that this hope is very distinctly characterised to them: they are not apparently imbued and inspired by it: they fall very much below the joy which the earliest saints looked for and found in its anticipations. Many of these suffer bodily debility and

pain. All of them detect in their material nature the provocative of temptation and the fuel of sin. "For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened." The mind is depressed and agitated. The outward senses are inlets to perpetual strifes and cares. The inferior part of our constitution, which we call the body, is therefore to be often endured as a heavy calamity: it is always to be "kept under and brought into subjection." Nor can we scarcely be amazed that they, who have suffered for dreary years "the thorn in the flesh," "the law in the members," "the motions of sins," should see little occasion of gladness in the promise which secures the renewing of that ingredient in which all these things inhered. Wasting by disease, will the Christian easily delight in any view of that which has brought him so low and wearied him so long? Buffeted by conflict, will he readily desire that the cause of defilement and vexation may be again knitted to his being? It is not to be denied that there are thousands, who seem well contented that their souls shall be saved and glorified, that the spiritual portion of their creation should be happy according to its largest capacity, yet all but reckless of that which may befall the body, scarcely regretting if that companionship should never be restored. Amidst sharp pangs of ailment and sinking tremours of mortality,—fightings without and fears within,—the comforter of the mourners is coldly heard and listlessly regarded who shall speak with fullest stress on a resurrection of the dead. Encouragement is indeed awakened, hope begins to smile, when they are assured how different shall be the risen body, how passionately ethereal and pure,—but all the solace, instead of yielding self-evident delight, must be reasoned and excepted, and even then it too ordinarily appears to be doubtingly estimated and slowly received.

This is a state of mind to be alike deplored and reprehended. It is the slight of a matchless good. It is the

pause of unworthy complacency in a most immature destiny. It too nearly approaches that ignoble temper which induced men of old to "put the word of God from them and to judge themselves unworthy of eternal life." If we be Christians, nothing will satisfy us, in our prayers and in our hopes, short of the resurrection of the dead!

When the Christian dies, his soul leaves his body. It is a decease or departure. It is an exodus. That withdrawment is proper death. The union of the two was held by animal life. That has ceased. The body consequently decays. The soul is now divided from its frame, and is separate. It lives, but we know not how it lives. It acts, but we know not how it acts. It is not in a condition such as the Maker originally intended. It is not the person of the man. It is not the integer man. It is the dividual. The human being is incomplete. It can only feel, in respect of itself, correspondently. There are deprivation and failure, and it must be conscious of them. It is under a certain influence of death. Though "God is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto him,"—yet are they called the dead, for it is thus "showed that the dead are raised." "They are the dead in Christ." It is a part of death that their spirits are alone in heaven. So our Lord was humbled. When He died, his spirit was that day in Paradise. The law and power of death were upon him in that disembodiment. He had descended into the deep. He was brought up again from the dead. It was release, but it was not triumph. The third day, which witnessed his resurrection, was the day of exaltation. All between that and his ascension was voluntary delay. They are but one event. The Surety of his followers was just affected as they are still. His spirit dwelt apart, ere his body and spirit were welcomed to heaven. It was by this two-fold stage that He entered into his glory. It is by this two-

fold stage that they must be glorified together with him. He went forth into eternity, first of all, in the nakedness of his spirit, and then he rose from the dead: they go forth so despoiled and denaturalised, until the investiture of their resurrection.

There is one passage of Scripture which seems so clearly to speak of the immediate happiness of the soul which has abandoned the present scene, that we cannot but point it out, and the more that it is so commonly misunderstood. It declares the residence which it has found, and supposes a congeniality between the occupant and the dwelling. "We know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life."* This "earthly house" is not our present body, for then the "building of God" must be that body when raised. How can that be "our house from heaven?" But here we are tenants of a frail earthly system: if it were "dissolved," as it is destined to dissolve, our celestial palace is secure. Even now we leave, that is in our spirits, the earthly for the heavenly house. The departing spirit is not "destitute," whatever be the change. It is not "unhoused,"† but acquires by its transition from earth a "permanent abode." It is

* 2 Cor. v. 1—4.

† There can be no doubt that the primitive verb Δυνω, signifies to "enter in:" prepositions, such as επι, εν, and εκ, lend it their varying meaning. To "clothe" is only an analogic sense: the inhabitant of a house may, figuratively, be said to be clothed with it. But the translation ought in this instance to have been the literal. It is now confusing and inelegant. "Not that we would go forth from the house of earth, save that we may go into that House of God which is eternal in the heavens."

subsequently to this figure,—which has no reference to the body, but only to the present earth,—that a new comparison is drawn, that of the body as a tenement and of the soul as its guest. And who does not see, that the argument requires that the House be *now* existing, that the weary spirit now seeks to enter into it, that access is open, that it finds in those many mansions the repose and joy it wants? "We *have* a building."

"Them who sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him." The covenant relation between Him and them, death cannot annul. They "die in the Lord." The immediate transition of the believer's soul to heaven gives consistency to his resurrection. That is but of the body. It is not a new creation of his manhood. The higher life was never interrupted. "Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him." The physical system which was interrupted is repaired. Instead, therefore, of opposing these truths to each other, we mark their mutual dependence and perfect harmony.

As it "is not incredible that God should raise the dead," so we must believe that a proper identity is involved in the act. It is the self-same body that shall rise. The small cavilings of wit and sophistry we care not to refute. We surely need not be informed of the corporeal changes and exhaustions. We will not deny that there is no particle, solid or fluid, which subsisted years ago. We will concede far more than we are bound to concede. What then? Does any man deny the continuity of processes which made that body one? Was it not his blood, whenever it might be spilt? Was it not his nerve, whenever it might be agonised? It is his own flesh which he nourisheth and cherisheth. And this event is its restitution, not only for every moral purpose, but in every degree of meaning which can obtain among the common ideas of mankind. If we "err,"—in subtle speculation and im-

pious unbelief,—it is that we "do not know the Scriptures nor the power of God."

But we are called to contemplate a resurrection "unto everlasting life." It shall not be of the flesh and blood which we now behold, and which cannot inherit the kingdom of God. It is the expansion of some seminal principle in them. There is sowed the animal body. It is described as a growth. The seed but unfolds itself, according to its own outworking, into every graceful texture and hue, into every delicious sweetness and fragrance. Even of matter, sentient or inorganic, there are various kinds and forms. There are bodies terrestrial and celestial: tellurian and astral, bright in reflected or embodied light. From the "animal," shall emerge the "spiritual," body. We are asked, What is a "spiritual body?" We cannot tell. We are asked, Is it not a contradiction in terms? We answer, no. Do we not somewhat understand what is intended by "the *carnal mind?*" That is equally self-contradictory. It is a mind which has become so gross by sensuality, so corrupt by sin, that it seems to have sunk down into an inferior rank of existence. That man is "the brutish person." In the same manner, may we not suppose that the spiritual body is the vehicle and volumen which has become so refined, and so adapted to the spirit, that it seems to have risen to a nobler elevation of being than that which is duly its own?

Our Lord said: "Destroy this body and temple, and I will raise it again in three days." His body was the same: but was it not the subject of many glorious transformations? Still we, by no means, would defend any confusion of the phænomena of mind and matter. We hold that their attributes, by which only they may be distinguished, cannot be interchanged. We protest against the possibility of a single manifestation being common to

them. The resurrection is an evolution of matter. This order of subsistence may be, however, inconceivably purified and enriched. We even now see the proof. Light is matter, or the vibration of molecular particles which are. Music is but the impulsion of invisible atmospheric waves. The aroma of herbs and flowers is but the divisibility of inappreciable atoms which they diffuse. Material bodies are already in heaven. Enoch was translated in undying complement, and it was, while walking in all the duties of external as well as hidden obedience, that God took him. Elijah mounted the chariot of fire, and he was rapt from earth as he "went on and talked," sense and limb borne hence as well as soul. These men "saw not death." It may be that they, who rose when their graves opened amidst the prodigies of the Crucifixion, followed the ascending Saviour into his glorious kingdom. HE is there in the entireness of our nature! When He was seen after his installation on his throne, he was yet the Son of man, in all the proportions of humanity, its perfect frame,—the head, the eyes, the right hand, the feet, the countenance,—though the head was covered with the brighest refulgence, though the eyes were as a flame of fire, though the right hand was filled with stars, though the feet were as fine brass glowing in the furnace, though the countenance was as the sun shining in its strength! And He is the pattern as well as the author of this transformation: "Who shall change our humiliated body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself."

This we believe to be the scripture account of the doctrine of the Resurrection. We indulge no fancy, we pursue no speculation. That he might attain to it, Paul pours out all the earnestness, and puts forth all the effort, of his soul. It may, then, be proper to investigate those

issues which it involves. We can only learn them from an inspired authority. We proceed, therefore, to enquire:

II. WHAT ARE THE SCRIPTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF ITS ACCOMPANIMENTS AND CONSEQUENCES?

We are required to do little more than to attend to the collation of certain passages, and the induction of certain facts, contained in the Sacred Writings. What will this august event embrace?

1. It is more than an inference that the saints in heaven shall possess a power of recognising, at least, all those whom they have known in holy fellowships on earth. We think that the certainty of such recognition is divinely affirmed. But it may not have occurred to some that every text, on which this truth is commonly supported, stands in reference to the resurrection. We deny it not of disembodied spirits. We think it may be inferred. Is violence done to their memory, and can their love be changed? Can a spirit made perfect be wanting in sympathies which so much purified it from imperfection? Can that which was made glad by pure affections be now robbed of that gladness? We must, however, allow that it is but a sound deduction drawn by ourselves. It is not declared. How different are the *declarations* which explain the remembrances, the greetings, the affections, of those, who were associated on earth, when they shall arise at the last day! "Knowing that he which raised up the Lord Jesus shall *raise us up* also by Jesus, and shall *present us with you.*" "Then we which remain alive shall be caught up *together with them* (for 'whom we sorrowed') in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not *even ye* in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ *at his coming?*" "That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke,.....that I may rejoice in the *day of Christ,* that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in

vain." "Now we beseech you by the *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together unto him." It is only "when that which is perfect has come," that we shall "see face to face," and "know even as we are known."

2. The happiness of our future condition is made very chiefly to depend upon the resemblance of our nature to Christ. We are to be conformed to Him. In the perfection of this conformity our reward will consist. The impress is strong undoubtedly upon the soul at rest. But it is when the saint arises from his grave that these lineaments shall receive their fullest expression and latest grace. "As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness." "We know that, when He shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." It is not the simple maturity of moral resemblance, of that same mind in us which was also in Christ Jesus: "it is the likeness of His resurrection."

3. There shall be a different acknowledgment of the disciples of Christ, in this event, than any which they have hitherto obtained. Here they were unknown. The world hated them. When they died the angels were impalpable which bore their spirits to heaven. Though precious in the sight of the Lord was their death, no open honours were done them. It was not as the rising up of a host. There was not a blowing of trumpets. They seem to steal to bliss. Their dust is unrecorded. They are "out of mind." Yet their names are to be confessed! They shall shine forth as the sun! But this ratification is reserved until the event which we now consider. It is "the manifestation of the sons of God." They shall be publicly avowed to be "the children of God, being the children of the resurrection." Thus "when He shall appear we may have confidence and not be ashamed before him at his coming."

4. High honour is destined for Christians. They shall be glorified with their Master and Head. The idea is of their participation, as far as capacity will allow, in all His reward. They sit down on his throne. They come to judgment with him. But while the spirit is parted from the body, this cannot be. In the reunion of these, they enjoy the complete fruition. "When Christ, who is our life, shall *appear*, then shall ye also appear with him in glory." "When the Chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory which fadeth not away." "Henceforth," cried the Apostle of the Gentiles, "there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness,"—he sees it, its glory dazzles him, it is furnished with all its circlets, it is studded with all its gems!—still it is not at death, but at the resurrection, that it is to be placed upon his brow,—"which the Lord the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day,"—the day of "his appearing." We see in the radiant forms which press upon our believing view, and in the tributes rendered to them, the determination of Christ to signalise his disciples. "Gather my saints together unto me; those who have made a covenant with me by sacrifice." How are the poor enriched! How are the feeble strengthened! How are the aged renovated! How are the despised disabused!

5. Until then, the excellencies of the regenerate remain but little known. They were the meek of the earth and the quiet of the land. Patient was their continuance in well-doing. They craved not to be seen of men. They lived in obscurity and were covered with reproach. Their goodness often revealed itself, but it was in partial exhibitions and with broken rays. Feeling themselves, when they had done all, to be unprofitable servants,—knowing that they could not be saved by works of righteousness which they had done,—every virtue was chastened by diffidence and shaded by humility. They cannot understand, in the great day of their vindication, how the ex-

cellencies can attach to them which are then rehearsed: "Lord, when saw we thee an hungered, and fed thee? when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?" In their mortal state, their principles were subjected to constant test. Their deeds of benevolence were exceeded by the deeds of suffering patience and humble meekness. These shall now be resounded through the arches of the sky: "That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise, and honour, and glory, *at the appearing* of Jesus Christ."

6. This is the full reward. Only "*then* shall the King say to them on the right hand, Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." "If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." "Thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." "They go in to the wedding." "They enter through the gate into the city." "To you who are troubled rest with us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels." Thus all connected with it is final. It is made the consummation of hope and desire. "I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." The former part of the Book of Revelation seems laid in heaven as it now is,—the heaven of disembodied spirits; but its latter scenes are represented in the heaven of glorified bodies as restored to their spirits. How negative is the description of the one in comparison with the other! The first speaks more of exemption: the second recites substantial and definite delight and service! While it is only a state of disparted existence, it is not intimated that death has ceased: when it is the condition of integral existence, the announcement is made, "There shall be no more death!" Earth at that period exists: in this it has

passed away ! Then, when all present things are dissolved, the elements, the ultimate essences of things,—a scene shall open until then unknown,—"We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."

Many of the noblest portions of Scripture refer to this consummation. "Then the end." Sometimes it is proposed in argument, and the argument assumes an unexpected shape. It stands in an inverted course. Instead of deducing the resurrection from the facts of the evangelic history and the principles of the evangelic doctrine, it is made the basis on which they are built. "But if *there be no resurrection of the dead,* then *Christ* is *not* risen. For if the dead rise not, then is not *Christ raised.*" At other times it is drawn out into beautiful description. "I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the *glory* which *shall be revealed* in us by the resurrection. For the earnest expectation of our present mortal nature waiteth, straineth, for the manifestation of the sons of God which shall be given by that event. For that physical condition or nature was made subject to vanity or perversion in sin and suffering and death,—not willingly,—it was in consequence of an arrangement independent of it, leaving it unconsulted,—but by the wise and just sentence of Him who thus visited the failure of a federal probation,—not, however, without the Hope that this human condition should be delivered from the bondage of corruption, or the grave, and itself partake in the glorious liberty of the children of God,—that the body should share the privileges of adoption which the soul had already known. It is obvious that such physical constitution of universal man groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now. Every where it lies under this subjection. And not only is this true in general, but we, instead of enjoying any respite because of being the sons of God, even we, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, do groan within our-

selves like other men, waiting for our perfect adoption, namely, the redemption, the reclamation, of the body, until then held by death."*

We, therefore, find that the righteous are described in Scripture as earnestly seeking and exultingly hailing this resurrection. They are represented to us in the attitude of imploring their Lord's return. They have seen him go into heaven, and believe that he shall so come in like manner. "For our conversation is in heaven: from whence we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ." "Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour." "To all them that love his appearing." "Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God." "The Lord direct your hearts into the love of God and into the patient waiting for Christ." "Hope to the end for the grace which shall be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ." "Behold He cometh with clouds! Even so, Amen." "He saith, surely I come quickly! Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus." It is plain, that this is the high foresight of Christians, the throbbing hope they can scarcely chasten, the onward speed they can ill restrain. What justifies all this vehemence of desire and expectation?

—It is the Triumph of Christ. We know that this is still a hostile world. We see not yet all things put under him. One enemy is peculiarly raging and powerful. It

* Rom. viii. 18—23. This seems to me the true meaning. The word Κτισις occurs four times in the quotation. It is the word which, in Mark xvi. 15, is rendered "creature," that is, *man*. It here represents man in his present condition of an outward kind, his body or flesh. The error of interpretation appears to be, in taking for granted that it is a figure of speech. No prosopopœia is to be understood. Of course the translations, "creature" and "creation" cannot both be right. The latter utterly misleads. We think at once of a terrestrial scene. We turn to some change of the planet. I am aware that my paraphrase is diffuse. Perhaps "*life*" might express the purport of κτισις in this connection. But it would not convey to most minds the meaning which the exegesis demands.

is the last that shall be destroyed. It is conquered, it is doomed, but it exists, and, in all visible effects, is what it was from the beginning. Our defiance is premature. We cannot now insult over it and cry: "O grave, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?" Its victory is marked by too fearful ensigns: its sting is attested by too envenomed wounds. But then He shall have come who of old exclaimed: "O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from my eyes." It shall be then abolished in reality as it is now by authority; it shall be swallowed up in victory as it is now baffled by it? it shall be cast out as an abominable thing. Trace of it shall not exist. Memorial of it shall not endure. The Resurrection is its overthrow and its extirpation. We "know that our Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after our skin worms destroy these bodies, yet in our flesh shall we see God." It is the epoch of His glory. His renown shall be full. His greatness shall be declared. All his enemies are made his footstool. Satan has long since writhed, and Death now grovels, beneath his tread. In this triumph well may his followers rejoice. It is their deliverance. But for His sake, whom they love, their rejoicing shall not be the less. "That when his *glory shall be revealed*, ye may be glad with exceeding joy." "When he shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe." "That we may be glorified together."

—It is the Redemption of the believer. "Ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your *body*, and in your spirit, which are God's." Our "outer," as well as "inner, man," is, then, a subject of this purchase. We are now "redeemed from the curse of the law." We now "have redemption in the blood of Christ, the forgiveness of sins." We now are "justified by the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." We now have "the seal of the

Spirit and the earnest of the inheritance." These present gifts look forward "unto the day of redemption." The body is now, in the surviving effects of our fall, "carnal, sold under sin." * The resurrection will be its "redemption." The body is now "the purchased possession." Christ is, in this view, after he has been set forth as "made unto us, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification,"—blessings of the soul—asserted to be "made unto us *redemption*." He will subvert and destroy every tendency of death. We shall live by him. Salvation, in its perfect accomplishment, is thus spoken of as delayed. It is something more than "the end of our faith, the salvation of our soul." "Unto them that look for Him shall he appear the second time without sin unto *salvation*."

—It is the Restitution of our entire nature. God made us with a material conformation as well as intellectual principle. We are aware of the one by sensation and of the other by consciousness. These were given for reciprocal help. Neither can be properly independent. The dependence, indeed, is not equal. The body cannot live at all without the soul: the soul can exist without the body. But that separate existence is disadvantageous and imperfect. It is, indeed, rendered to the departed Christian happy and glorious. But we must believe that a new Power is at work upon it to make it this. Many embarrassments must require to be overcome. It is not agreeable to the laws of the first creation. It is the introduction of a new form of being. It is to us very, if not altogether,

* Rom. vii. 14. It has often perplexed the reader of this account of Paul's experience, how he could thus designate himself. The inward contest, alas! we all find possible and true. But he especially rests his appeal upon the depraved instincts and workings of his sentient nature, the seat of all concupiscence. It was like a captive. It was sold to certain consequences of temptation and death "under sin." He renews the figure (for as a figure must it be treated) in the next chapter, ver. 23. "The *Redemption* of the body." It is not to be applied to the sanctified soul, but only to our earthly and corporeal state.

unintelligible. We can frame no idea of disembodied mind. We cannot conceive of it in its solitary exercise. The body was given to assist it. Their disseverment is an evil to both. It is a maimed effect. They shall be reinstated in that original unity which is now torn asunder. Man shall stand up as God made him, in his first image and likeness, and be taken à second time out of the ground. He shall be again pronounced, "very good." What a thought of retribution is this! "Fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell." The two-fold distinction of the one person opens the sources of a doubled penal woe. By the same reasoning it may be proved that the body, when raised in "incorruption, power, and glory," shall perfect the heavenly happiness of the isolated soul, by restoring to it the implement of its action and the medium of its being. Until the resurrection, the Christian, however favoured, wherever placed, is not himself!

—Purposes will then be indicated which our present mixed being has not hitherto revealed. The uses of the mind are significant and declared. We can understand that its capacities may be always availing. Whithersoever it be translated, we can conceive of its natural, unconstrained, occupation. The bodily tenement, or organ, is as intelligible for its place and design in the present life. It binds us to the external world. It is the only channel of sensation and impression. In want of it, the mind would be a nullity for all influence and agency. It would be destitute of any reflected life. By a special dispensasation, as we suppose, it is fitted for separate existence until the resurrection. But what shall be the employment and appropriation of the body in the celestial state? What high ends can it subserve? Its functions now are partly gross. "Meats for the belly, and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them." All such ideas are inadmissible in its future form. Yet is there not, even now, a sacredness thrown around it? The

tongue can minister grace. Our members may be instruments of righteousness unto God. "The body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body." "Our bodies are the members of Christ." "Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost?" The inference is easy,—that as the body upon earth is the only means by which the useful activities of the soul can be made effectual, so in heaven it is the instrument of all objective influence, of all benevolent agency, of all access to the creatures who are dwelling there. Not in solitude is the spirit of the redeemed simply to meditate and adore. Heaven is a blessed society,—the city, the kingdom, the household. Sympathy is its law. Fellowship is its constitution. And the flesh, purified of taint and sublimated into imperishableness, shall be the willing and fitted sensorium for the exercise of the deepest charities which the soul can know, and for the impression of corresponding charities from the like-minded multitudes by which it is surrounded.

—A congeniality will thus be established between the risen saints and the materialism of their glorious abode. They who had passed thither,—the Antediluvian saint, the Tishbite prophet,—in their integrity of nature, doubtless had understood it most and enjoyed it best. We believe it to be related to space. "That Holy Thing," the Incarnate Christ, the Manhood of our Lord, is there. Matter needs matter: embodiment requires a similar externalism. The man, now made whole, can only be happy by what answers to himself. Upon the order and texture of that materialism, and upon that sense which ascertains it, we presume not to speculate. But such must be the facts. Sun and star cannot represent the one: our frail sensuousness can only very imperfectly describe the other. It is enough for us to know that, to perfect our nature, it is necessary to bring us back to what we were, to realise the first intention of our being. Matter entered largely into the character of it. Its good was intended, most

certainly, by the addition of that matter to the mere spirit. Until that matter, whatever is its nucleus, be revived, we live not as we were "fearfully and wonderfully" framed to live. That superincumbence must suggest no thought of sickness, lassitude, decay, oppression, resistance, death. It stands to the soul in every relation of design, adjustment, affinity. It is a vesture of light transparent to all its expressions! It is the chariot of its speed! It is the shrine of its ministry! It is the wing of its immortality! And what must be all that encircles it! How fair those scenes its eye can behold! How deep those harmonies its ear can imbibe! How pure those beams which shine around its step! How bright those skies which are spread out for its expatiation! The Forerunner hath for us entered! He hath gone to prepare a place for us!

—In this reintegration of our manhood shall be displayed the most perfect spectacle of the beauty of holiness. The mind has been, since its conversion, in a course of sanctification. It has passed at death to all the purity of which the liberated spirit can partake. "He that is dead is free from sin." It was long depressed by the body, and has wearied of the conjunction. It saw that this separation was necessary for itself to be made perfect. But the Holy Ghost has taught us that, in this life, the "vessel is to be kept in sanctification and honour." He has declared his final purpose concerning it: "If the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you." Body cannot be intelligent, however it be refined: it cannot, therefore, even in heaven, be sanctified as is the soul. It is unsusceptible of holy motive. But its lower appetites may be taken away. Its evil promptings may be thoroughly rectified. It may be adapted to all the purity of that which is its life and guest. It may be the

becoming palace and the worthy tabernacle of him who is king and priest unto God. When such different entities shall combine not only in one person but one effect,—when not a sin is possible in either,—when holiness, according to their laws, is common to both,—then shall we be "sanctified wholly." Holiness will then be exemplified in all its doings as well as in all its principles. We shall then know what that scripture meaneth,—"To the end the Lord may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, *at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ* with all his saints!"

—Pledge arises out of these assurances, that there shall be an endless progression of meliorating and exalting dispensations in the Divine conduct towards them who are glorified. Perpetual youth may illustrate their strength: but theirs is ancient wisdom and profound maturity. Yet the nature, which is developed in them, forbids restriction. They follow on to know and to improve. They soar towards the infinite. Their heart and their flesh crieth out for the living God.

This we receive as the scripture account of the Doctrine. But we would not allow the supereminence which distinguishes it, to shade down any other truth. It cannot be denied that some persons have been so engrossed with it, that they have made too light of the precious discovery which we possess concerning the Christian's departed soul. They have spoken of the soul when disembodied as existing in a dim and dreaming state. Notwithstanding astute objection,* we are disposed to think that the vision of Paul was one, and that he speaks of the third heaven and of paradise as the same. Why should we set one fact against the other? The felicity of the separated soul is the most desirable good, *next* to the Resurrection of the dead! But this must be our last ambition, our chief joy!

* See Campbell's Dissertation on Ἅδης and Γεεννα.

But this is not placed in the light of an independent, inevitable, event. It is to be essayed. It is brought under the power of certain means. While the simple act must occur, whatever be our will,—its character and bearing depend upon ourselves. "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

III. WHAT ARE THE DETERMINATIONS BY WHICH IT IS TO BE WON?

The Manner, or the Method, by which it is to be attained, primarily supposes far higher means than those we can command. We would not separate "Jesus and the resurrection." We can only look to the Atonement of Christ. It is "the power of his resurrection" which secures our confidence. "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, according to his abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ." But this hope pertains to that which is "reserved in heaven:" and to a "salvation" which is only "ready to be revealed in the last time." The *means*, however, in this connection, refer not to the causative, but to the moral: to the influence of our present character and conduct on this event.

We often mark the impression of our former conduct upon our present condition. Every deed, however distant, seems to be living on, not only in inducing habit but by entailing consequence. Those of childhood affect us still. And this connection we must not confine to different portions of the same life; we must transfer the thought of such connection from our present life to that which is to come. We exist and act for all the future of our immortality. We now weave the robes with which our nature shall be clad at the last day.

There is, therefore, a resurrection pourtrayed to us more solemn than even that of our quickened flesh. The entire series of all that has constituted responsible thought and word and deed, shall reappear. "Every one shall

receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad." "Every man shall find according to his ways." All is not only to be brought to light, but is traced in its issue and weighed in its effect. The whole past becomes suddenly animated; a searching out, as from their graves of oblivion, vivifies every hidden thing; forgotten acts resume their former shape and teem with their former motive; they rise up on every side; they press upon their proper agents; they point individually; they testify aloud. "Seeing that we look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of Him in peace, without spot, and blameless."

—What Prayer should we devote to this Attainment! It should spring forward to that morning in which the upright shall have dominion, and the saints shall be arrayed in the comely garments of their royal state. It should find motive, in that great revolution of all things, for its warmest strength and boldest plea. Is it possible that we have never given one petition to it? Can we think of corruption putting on incorruption, of mortal putting on immortality, and not be excited to importune desires that we may thus attain unto the resurrection of the dead? Why should we limit prayer while aught remains unperfected? We admit that this event follows in a certain course. The happy soul shall receive a corresponding frame. But the degree of its glory, the measure of its blessedness are not unconditional. And why should we not pour out our hearts in earnest supplication for this the crowning blessing of all? We should not know what to pray for as we ought, but for promise: that which is promised, instead of relaxing the ardour of prayer, is the directory of its exercise, and the assurance of its fulfilment. Every holy aspiration now towards the resurrection will be remembered, answered, and accomplished, in its fairer lustre and more glorious dignity.

—What Anticipation should familiarise this Attain-

ment! Rapt into no indefinite future, but all whose times and seasons are under a divine charge,—following the dictates of a sure word of prophecy,—we know that the just shall emerge from their tombs in a condition of surpassing excellence and joy. It is the rising of all the great and good that ever lived. They now live by Christ. Their spirits have entered into peace, "each one walking in his uprightness." But they, also, "rest in their beds." They are "both dead and buried, and their sepulchres are with us unto this day." When all start to life, when all tower in majesty, when prophets and kings and righteous men "appear in glory," then will the harvest of the earth be ripe, and then shall the earth be reaped. And should not our minds be filled with every image and every description which shadows the event,—should we not throw ourselves upon the mighty scene,—should we not seek to be carried out in the Spirit of the Lord, that he would set us down in the valley full of bones, and cause us to pass by them round about? It was in this vision, of the Redeemer raising his saints, that the ancient prophet exclaimed,—"Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold and not another: my reins are consumed in me!" that is: All my prayers are answered, all my desires are granted, all my inmost intents are realised! Can we be indifferent to such jubilee, can we but reach forth to such a "weight of glory?"

—What Preparation should facilitate this Attainment! We keep our heart, we watch our soul. But there is a sentient and material fellowship to these. There is an outward volumen. This at given periods declines. "The keepers of the house tremble and the strong men bow themselves. The silver cord is loosed and the golden bowl is broken." At last it dies, it moulders, it disappears. This is the subject of the resurrection. Moreover, this body instigates much sloth and evil. Would we that it should rise,—the flesh which we never learnt to thwart

nor were habituated to subdue? Would we embrace it in all its waywardness and all its oppressiveness? A special discipline does it require and will it repay. "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth." "Yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness." "He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting." Let us guard and refine every grosser sense. Let us make a covenant with our eyes. Let us set a watch upon our lips. Should we pamper for sin that which we hope shall be raised for holiness? Should we pervert the proper powers of that which we hope shall be raised for its original purpose? Should we turn into a foul and hateful tyrant of the soul that which we hope shall be raised in perfect subjection to it? Should we defile that which we hope should be raised as the instrument of a taintless purity? Shall we not harden it to resist unto blood striving against sin? Shall we not teach it to die daily, even crucifying it with its affections and lusts? Shall we not rather now train it for exercise unto godliness, begin to attire it in its celestial white, and prepare it for its noble destination?

—What Counterpart should we exhibit of this Attainment! We believe that after our bodies shall have slept, it may be, for ages, a "calling from on high" shall be heard. We believe that the Saviour has thus spoken, and will thus speak: "Thy dead men shall live: as my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead." What shall we be then! What solemn forms shall throng the mighty surface of our earth! All that are Christ's at his coming! How strange shall we be to ourselves! What a beam shall fall on the outward shape as though turning to the soul's essence! It is the image of the heavenly! It is the similitude of God! And shall our present life be past as in ungraceful,

indecorous, incoherence and contrast? What manner of persons ought we to be! We may now stand on the actual spot where our feet shall rest at the resurrection! These scenes which we now behold may be the witnesses of our suddenly reunited elements of being! Among our fellows, in city and in church, the first flash of our splendour may break! Should we not now declare ourselves? Should not our whole conversation comport with such a prospect? Should we not manifest that we are already risen with Christ, and that we now sit with him in heavenly places? Should not the temple be so unprofaned that, when taken down, it may be deposited and arranged for the most easy erection again? Should we not, as more than conquerors, be so prepared for this triumph, that we may have nothing left to do but to wipe the dust of death from our deathless brows?

To incite us towards this Attainment there are two views, which must impress our minds.

The *first* is, the relation which the present happy spiritualism of deceased saints bears to the resurrection. They exclaim: "How long, O Lord, how long?" This is not the precise reference of their cry: but they seek, in this prayer, the evolution, stage after stage, of the Divine plan which will then be fulfilled. And this is probably the true comparison,—that as we now desire to depart and be with Christ in a disembodied state, a blessing immense in itself,—though a blessing granted with a humbling reservation and condition,—so are they, to speak most cautiously, not less intent, now that they have reached that prize, to attain unto this consummation of all blessings. From the present earth we "are confident and willing rather" to go forth in our bodiless soul: from yonder heaven their bodiless soul even now spreads its wings to go forth and meet the embraces of their rising flesh. To us the resurrection is consequent upon a prior change: to them it is proximate. "Blessed are the

dead which die in the Lord from *henceforth;*" but from that point a new hope begins and a higher purpose is projected.

The *second* thought, calculated to enlarge our ideas of the resurrection, is furnished by the representation of that intermediate state itself. It is a relic and disadvantageous condition of death, though of death as far as possible mitigated. As a part and consequence of death, it is personified as well as death! Whithersoever Death may rush, "Hades follows with it:" that is, the separation of the soul from the body is a necessary effect of death. It is of Hades that we ask at the resurrection, "Where is thy victory?" It has been a wrong unto the redeemed. It shall be overthrown, that is, not only as a state, but as a separating power, in the destruction of death. "Death and Hades shall be cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death."

Oh! is not this a fulness of times for which all our sojourning here should be spent! Is not this a "glory to be revealed in us," demanding and deserving the employment of all means to attain unto it? What labour should we forego? What sacrifice should we regret? It cannot be too anxiously regarded, too wistfully sought, too sedulously pursued.

And yet there is something in the death of those we mourn, and in our own, which makes it difficult for us to anticipate the perfect blessedness of the risen state, and to concentrate our whole earnestness upon it. The last look of the beloved! When we saw the changing feature, the glazing eye, the pallid cheek! There is a more recoiling remembrance! We took another and another look of that countenance from which expression had scarcely passed away. For a little we thought there was a smile. We imagined that the spirit had left a trace of its rapture upon the visage. Still came change. Death plied its work.....We "buried our dead out of our

sight." That impression haunts us still. In vain we would evoke the eye of youth and the vermilion of health. This thrusts away the vision of beauty. It is a clinging memory from which we cannot escape. Thinking then upon the resurrection, that transfixed face, that shrouded form, seem to revive. We shrink from the embrace.—Faith comes to our relief. Now we think of beauty touched into celestial grace, and brightened by immortal radiance. The best estate on earth is but a faint shadow of the present loveliness. It is a transfiguration. What a delineation! What an array!—And now we may muse on another view, more personal than relative, of the resurrection. The body and the spirit are disunited at death. It is often in struggle, and as amidst contention, that this separation is accomplished. There is mutual weariness and, well-nigh, disgust. The body is a load. Pains dart through it. Convulsions sieze upon it. The vigour of the soul is impeded. Its tranquillity is marred. But the body may complain. The soul frets it by its activity and exhausts it by its vigilance. They are reconciled to part. They are not in their present conditions fitted for each other. Shall that body be restored? Can the soul indulge the aspiration? Faith comes to our relief. When that flesh shall rise, it shall be the perfect auxiliary of the soul. No intellectual energies shall it depress and clog. Perfect sympathy binds them. They are like the most exactly attuned chords,—as two soft-swelling waves meeting on a sunlit sea, and amidst their own brilliancy and with their own music mingling into one,—twins of inborn and undivided love and will,—double stars moving on one centre!

Let us, then, give all diligence to this end. Let us reject from us every feeling of a low and abject contentedness with religion as the simple means of safety. Give your spirits up to a nobler ambition. He who loves not religion for its own sake, shall never find even the safety

which it proclaims. Think how your soul can excel. Forbid not its emulation. Encourage it to seek the station nearest to the throne. Pause not even then. More remains for you to do. Secure a triumph for your dust! As to every seed is given its own body, plant in the grave the germ of glory, honour, and immortality. "Deck thyself now with majesty and excellency; and array thyself with glory and beauty." Lay up a precious store for the soul when it is required of you, that you may be "all glorious within:" and for the outward man when it must rise, that your "clothing may be of wrought gold." Thus will you resemble them who bore all sufferings and persecutions, that "they might obtain a *better resurrection!*" Thus will you plead His assurance,—though in a humbler application, yet scarcely with a restricted meaning,—who, foreseeing the dissolution of His Human Nature by death, the division of his soul from his body, and the resurrection of his body for the return of his soul,—exclaimed: "Thou wilt not leave my soul in that state of separation, nor suffer thy Holy One to see corruption!"

SERMON XVI.

THE LAST JUDGMENT.

Rev. xx. 11—13.

And I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them; and they were judged every man according to their works.

Suffer me to relieve emotions, which the recital of words like these cannot fail to raise, by an allusion to a well known fact.

When Massillon pronounced one of those discourses, which have placed him in the first class of orators, he found him himself surrounded by the trappings and pageants of a royal funeral. The temple was not only hung with sable, but shadowed with darkness, save the few twinkling lights of the altar. The beauty and the chivalry of the land were spread out before him. The censers threw forth their fumes of incense, mounting in wreaths to the gilded dome. There sat Majesty, clothed

in sackcloth and sunk in grief. All felt in common, and as one. It was a breathless suspense. Not a sound stole upon the awful stillness. The master of mighty eloquence arose. His hands were folded on his breast. His eyes were lifted to heaven. Utterance seemed denied him. He stood abstracted and lost. At length, his fixed look unbent; it hurried over the scene, where every pomp was mingled and every trophy strewn. It found no resting-place for itself amidst all that idle parade and all that mocking vanity. Again it settled; it had fastened upon the *bier*, glittering with escutcheons and veiled with plumes. A sense of the indescribable nothingness of man "at his best estate," of the meanness of the highest human grandeur, now made plain in the spectacle of that hearsed mortal, overcame him. His eye once more closed; his action was suspended; and, in a scarcely audible whisper, he broke the long-drawn pause—"*There is nothing great, but God.*"

It would be in vain for me to attempt his power of impression; but it may not be wrong to covet his depth of feeling. And while these words are yet vibrating on your ears, and are harrowing up your souls, I take the abrupt and sublimely affecting sentence and mould it to the present theme,—*There is nothing solemn but Judgment.*

The thunder-storm is solemn: when the lightnings, "as arrows, shoot abroad;" when the peals startle up the nations; when the dread artillery rushes along the sky. But what is it to that far-resounding crash, louder than the roar and bellow of ten thousand thunders, which shall pierce the deepest charnels, and which all the dead shall hear?

The ocean-tempest is solemn: when those huge billows lift up their crests; when mighty armaments are wrecked by their fury; when the proudest barks are shattered, broken as the foam, scattered as the spray. But what is

it to that commotion of the deep, when "its proud waves" shall no more "be stayed," its ancient barriers no more be observed, the largest channels be emptied, and the deepest abyss be dried?

The earthquake is solemn: when, without a warning, cities totter, and kingdoms rend, and islands flee away. But what is it to that tremour which shall convulse our globe, dissolving every law of attraction, severing every principle of aggregation, heaving all into chaos and heaping all into ruin?

The volcano is solemn: when its cone of fire shoots to the heavens, crimsoning the zenith with its portentous blaze; when, from its burning entrails, the lava rushes to overspread distant plains and to overtake flying peoples. But what is that to the conflagration, in which all the palaces and the temples and the citadels of the earth shall be consumed; of which the universe shall be but the sacrifice and the fuel?

Great God! must *our* eyes see—*our* ears hear—these desolations and distractions? Must *we* look forth upon these devouring flames? Must *we* stand in judgment with Thee? Penetrate us now with Thy fear; awaken the attention, which Thy trump shall not fail to command; surround our imagination with the scenery of that great and terrible day! Let us now come forth from the graves of sin, of unbelief, of worldliness, to meet the overture of Thy mercy, as we must perforce start then from our sepulchres to behold the descending Judge! Search and try us now, that Thou mayest not condemn us then! Let Thy terror now persuade, that it may not then destroy, us!

Yes, it is no illusion. The heavens *shall* be as the scorched scroll of parchment; this solid earth *shall* stagger as the drunken man, and cry as the travailing woman. The period was long since determined, when time shall have completed its course, when probation

shall have run its measure, and when all the designs of the present system shall be fulfilled: when the bright lights of heaven shall die out and be for ever darkened, when "the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat," and "all these things shall be dissolved!"

Remember, that this Judgment can never be modified, can never be remitted, can never be reversed. It is "Eternal Judgment!"

It is the day of God! It is "the judgment of the great day!" "It is the time of the dead, that they should be judged!" "It is the revelation of the righteous judgment of God!"

This Passage is full of terrific grandeur. It is the announcement of that Event in which we all possess the most momentous interest. It is more: it is its vivid representation. It is more: it is its action and evolution. The scene passes before us! It lives to us! We are placed in the midst of it! We recognise the awakened throngs! We hear their piercing cries! We witness the portending signs! We behold their unfolding pomp! How is Nature agitated! The stars fall from heaven! The seas boil in fury! The forests are charred with the enwrapping blaze! The mountains fall down before the fiery storm, as shrivelled reeds! The proudest works of man crumble into dust! The Judgment is set! Its Seat is reared! The Retinue gathers! The Trumpet sounds! He cometh! He cometh! The Throne is filled! He calleth to the heavens from above, and to the earth that he may judge his people! "He shall judge the world with righteousness, and the people with his truth."

Let us consider the scenery, which shall illustrate this august assize: the multitude that shall be summoned to it: the process, which must direct it.

I. LET US CONSIDER THE SCENERY, WHICH SHALL ILLUSTRATE THIS AUGUST ASSIZE.

The "throne" is the emblem of royal dignity. "Only," said Pharoah to Joseph, "on the throne will I be greater than thou." It is the symbol of Divine supremacy. "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens, and His kingdom ruleth over all." "His throne is as a fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire." It is a "throne of glory," which He will "not disgrace." It is a "throne of holiness," which He will "remember." It is a throne of mercy, to which we have access. It is a throne, which "is for ever and ever." It is a throne, which is "high" and which is "lifted up." Sometimes "He holdeth back the face of this throne." Sometimes "clouds and darkness are round about Him;" "righteousness and judgment," however, are alike its "habitation" and its base.

But *this* "throne" is new to heaven. It is specially furnished; and He sitteth upon it, who judgeth right.

It is "a great white throne." Refulgent in its purity and righteousness; formed of the fleecy vapours, burnished with the radiance of sun-beams, woven from the garniture of the sky. Sunrise and sunset never imprinted that stately purple, that glowing vermilion, that molten gold. It is vast, shadowy, undefined. No rainbow of the covenant girdles it; no suppliants or penitents sue before it; no pardons are issued from it. It is a tribunal throne. "He hath prepared His throne for judgment."

It is occupied. There is One, that "sitteth upon it." This is often characteristic and distinctive of the Father. There is no manner of similitude. Nothing at first appears to guide us in the present discrimination. There is no form. It seems Essential, and not distinguished, Deity. But need we be at loss? "We must all appear before the judgment-seat *of Christ*." "When *the Son of Man* shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory." He is now enshrined with all the splendour, as He ever possessed all the fulness, of the Godhead. Sometimes He

is "seated with His Father on *His* throne;" sometimes we look forth on "the throne of God and of the Lamb." He now "thinketh it no robbery to be equal with God," and as God he is "Judge himself." And yet we are to be called the idolaters of the nineteenth century, because we "honour the Son even as we honour the Father!" This is to be made the grave charge against us. This is to be the taunt upon our missions to the heathen. It is said that we build up what we profess to throw down. It is the stale conceit of the earliest persecutors of the Christians! So worn a quibble will not move us! Blessed Jesus! if *we* be idolaters, who—what—are the multitudes bending around Thy throne, casting their diadems at Thy feet, and crowning Thee Lord of all?

"From the face" of Him, who sitteth upon the throne, "the earth and the heaven flee away." Who can think of that Countenance and not associate with it pensive downcast, deepest affliction, sweetest meekness? He "gave His cheeks to them who plucked off the hair:" "they struck Him with the palm of their hand?" they "smote Him with a reed;" they "blindfolded Him;" He "hid not His face from reproach and spitting." "His visage was more marred than any man." Those temples were lacerated with thorns; those eyes overflowed with tears; blood trickled down those channels, which violence had furrowed and grief had worn. Into what expressions must that countenance have now kindled! With what terrors must it now be clothed! Things inanimate, insensible, smitten with a strange panic and with a sudden dismay, start back; and those refulgent heavens and this fair earth shrink into ancient disorder and anarchy: they rush into primæval chaos and night. But not so can the sinner "flee away;" rocks—mountains—cannot cover him; there is no hiding-place for "the workers of iniquity." If he make his bed in hell, there is the presence which he cannot shun!

Heaven and earth having fled away, "no more place is found for them." It may denote the dissolution of the whole created œconomy: it may simply refer to the dissolution of our planetary system, or only to our globe with its canopied atmosphere and all that belongs to it. Of this we are not informed. Ignorant are we of creation's wide extent and of the relations which unite its mighty realms. It makes little difference, whether it be the greater catastrophe or the inferior; the larger could not strike a deeper terror—the smaller could not induce a less. It is all to us, though the universe is rolling onward in its path; though other suns and stars hold on their way; though the other populations share not the overthrow; our world, *our* earth and *our* heaven, "find no more place." What matters it to the animalcule, that noble streams are flowing, when its own drop is exhaled? What matters it to the insect, that majestic forests flourish, when its own leaf has decayed? What matters it to the emmet, that chains of magnificent mountain-height are mingling with the skies, when its own hillock is overturned?

And why do heaven and earth pass away? and why is no more place found for them? They have realised their end. They were but as the platform and the scaffolding; the erection is complete. They are of no further use. They may be set aside. They may be cast away. "The mystery of God" is "finished." There is "the consummation." Time, therefore, need "be no longer."

Let us not forget this mysterious fact. Its record is due to the Personage who sends forth an aspect so strange, so glorious, that even heaven and earth cannot endure the sight: He is the crucified One. It is He, whose doctrine has been so long a stumbling-block; it is He, who was put to death in weakness and in shame. No reproach was withheld. No indignity was restrained. He was nailed to the Tree! Malefactors were his companions! He bore an accursed death! The brand of heaven and

of earth was upon it! Complex was His Person; awful was His investiture. But why is *He* the Judge? "All judgment is committed unto Him, because He is the *Son of man*." "God hath appointed a day wherein to judge the world in righteousness by that Man, whom He hath ordained:" of which He hath given this notification, "that He hath raised Him from the dead." The deep covering, which so long shrouded him, now unfolds; that which was hidden, is proclaimed; that which was perverted, is disabused. Jesus is vindicated; every reproach is rolled away. All will acknowledge, that He has made good each challenged right, that He has made clear each suspected transaction, that He has made honourable each aspersed attribute: while the Cross stands up as the very basis and index and trophy of all, and He who now "comes the second time," throws the renown and the triumph of His second coming over whatsoever was misunderstood and misconstrued in the first.

The contrast of his first and second advent forces itself upon our view. When He came in the days of his flesh, there was quiet greeting of his approach. A solitary star lighted up its lamp. Angels glided down from heaven with a natal song, and immediately returned. Peace was proclaimed among all the nations of the earth. Shepherds receive the tidings. Sages offer the tributes. All the proper and natural magnificence is repressed. The descending God is clothed in an infant's form. He is roofed by a stable and cradled in a manger. Poverty has borne him. Lowliness is his attendant. Charity is his store. His life is sought. He flees. He survives for scorn. He is the Nazarene. He is captured, arraigned, condemned, crucified amidst execrations. He has gone into heaven. Serene was his ascent. He now comes again. How unlike that Babe of Bethlehem, that Victim of Calvary, is "this glorious appearing of the Great God our Saviour!" "Lo! this is our God!" Not the lonely

star attests him, but all the constellations of heaven. The seven thunders utter their voice. All kindreds of the earth wail because of him. Their revelry is stilled. Their unbelief is abashed. The sign of the Son of Man has confounded all. His dying voice shook the earth, but now once more he shakes not the earth only but also heaven. From that Face, which was buffeted, scarred, outraged by the last contumely, heaven and earth flee away!

Another remark is also due to the whole of this great and singular scene: it is incapable of description and embellishment. We take the scenery as it is delineated; and with that we must satisfy ourselves. It is unsusceptible of exaggeration. If any of us could overleap the boundaries of time, and could see the winding up of the great drama of human events and mortal interests, would any of us report, that the judgment was too greatly described? that the clangour of the trumpet was not so piercing, that the combustion of the elements was not so vehement, that the apparition of the rising dead was not so appalling and so strange? Could any of us say, that it was overdrawn, and that it had been extravagantly represented? Faint is every metaphor, feeble is every description, unworthy is every imagining, when compared —rather when contrasted—with that which the reality shall prove.

When this Event is believed on the faith of Divine Revelation, then only can it be properly regarded. Until then it is surmise, whether reason has suggested, or imagination has painted, it. We despise not any grounds on which its probability may rest; be it general analogy, conscientious intuition, or common consent. We turn not aside from oracle, poetry, philosophy, which may have taught it. We neglect no human inference or tradition. All these may show that the Judgment is probable, reasonable, desirable, necessary, just. All these may show

that, however men have dreaded it, they could not resist the overwhelming proofs. Yet only as we "have faith in God," speaking to us by his word, do we know and feel that this anticipation is *true*. There He certifies us. There He forewarns us. Henceforth there is full and practical conviction. "So then every one of us must give account of himself to God."

There is "a throne," "a great white throne." It is occupied by Him, whom the people despised and the nations abhorred, who was a prey and scoff. From His face, suddenly transformed and transfigured, "heaven and earth flee away;" all the wonders which hung in the expanse of the one, all the monuments which cover the surface of the other, have perished. They are superseded in every design and use. But Jesus is vindicated, beholding the honours of His tribunal; while he reclines amidst glories and revelations which it is not only impossible to exaggerate but even, in the most measured manner, to describe.

II. WE NOW, THEN, TURN TO THE MULTITUDE THAT SHALL BE SUMMONED TO THIS JUDGMENT.

When we have entered a Court of justice, there has been one point of concentrated interest and attention. However splendid the forms of its administration, however solemn the functionaries of its exercise, whatever may have been the significance of its types, whatever may have been the dreadness of its issues, until Law seemed built up into a throned state and to have been covered with a spotless robe, all, all were forgotten by us while intent upon *the prisoner at the bar*. There he stood: and what a spectacle! The excess of feeling had confounded every feature, until they had lost their power, and were incapable of their expression. The face exhibited a haggard vacancy, and the spirit sunk down to a torpid despair. And yet how keenly alive was he to every glance that was directed, to every word that was

breathed, bearing upon his case! Then how his eye riveted! How attentive was his ear! Every function and organ of sense seemed to vibrate! The representatives of magistracy, the deathsman himself, were not half so dreadful, as that poor gasping horror-stricken wretch, awaiting the verdict of his guilt, foreboding the sentence of his condemnation!

We were spectators then: we shuddered but from the force of sympathy. We are now arraigned. We ourselves now are cited. We ourselves must confront this inquest; we ourselves must stand before this judgment-seat. All are comprehended; all are summoned. Ye are no more by-standers. "Come to judgment!" Ye who have ever lived, ye who have ever died, "the quick and the dead."

Oh! this innumerable, this untold crowd! It were to insult its vastitude, to compare it to any of the throngs of earth: the millions which Elis attracted—which Godfrey marshalled — over which Xerxes wept: when whole peoples have been stirred, when mighty nations have risen up, when they have said "A confederacy," when the appeal has been made to a contemporary race and to a listening world!

Who knows the number of that generation of his species which now fills this earth? Say that it is five hundred millions, low as is this computation. Begin not to reckon it for the first thousand years from the creation. Then, from that epoch, you must multiply it at least a hundred and fifty times. Arithmetic has no fictitious figure, by which to include it; or, if it might find the number or the sound, there the index might point, or there the sound might be uttered, but the mind would not be travelling with it—would not be informed by it. Yet some impression may be made upon us, when we think of those that shall "stand in the judgment," by ascertaining the sources whence they are derived.

"The sea gave up its dead." What navies have been shattered, and have been devoured, by its rage!—Pharaoh and his host were engulphed in its waves. Ensign, chariot, steed,—warrior, magician, prince,—were swept away by their fury. "The sea covered them." "There remained not so much as one of them."—The whole world perished in its overflow. The wreck is on summit and in cave. It is traced far down in the foundations of the earth. The flood-marks of elevation and subsidence may be read as on a scale.—It is resistless. It has encroached upon the kingdoms and the dwelling-places of men. It is the very emblem of all that is insatiable: human cupidity, aggrandisement, ambition. It conceals that which it has swallowed up. Who can extort its secrets? Who can take its spoils? Who can fathom its depths? Who can search its caverns? But He who said to the waves of Gennesaret, "Peace, be still," shall control the multitudinous oceans of our earth, and then every solitude shall be searched, and every depth shall be sounded. Its prey shall be exacted of it. Each betrayal shall be wrung from it, and all its captives be restored.

"Death delivered up the dead which were in it." This is the power of the grave, it is the personification of Death. The deep places of the earth, the dry land, are but its domain. Let us think, however decorated this scene may be, that it is only a painted sepulchre; we are only treading on the dust of our predecessors, as posterity will soon tread on ours. But He who burst the barriers of the tomb, and made death bow before Him,—He shall send forth His mandate, publish His behest; and then the vaults, and the catacombs, and the mummy pits, and the bone-houses, shall disgorge their relics: and death shall yield, confessing all it knows, stripped of all it boasts and while the whole of this earth shall seem to stir with motion and once more to heave with life, The dead shall

live. Death is no longer the keeper of the prison-house, but delivers up the dead.

It was much, for the sea to obey Him who sitteth on the throne; it was more, for inexorable death—the grave—the sepulchre—to yield its victims; but "hell"—the place of departed spirits, where the disembodied soul of man is to be found, whether in happiness or in woe—Hades* has listened to a voice, until then unknown to it. The gates of "the shadow of death" unbar, and its portals fly open. And now, there come—there come—there come—clouds of spirits rolling upon clouds, in swift succession, with impetuous rush; sumless, but unmixed, but individualised; the consciousness of each distinct, the character of each defined, the memory of each unobliterated, and the sentence of each foredoomed. And Hades sends back spirits to those bodies, which the sea and the grave may no more retain.

"The small and the great stand before God." All who have been among the mighty, and would not "let go their prisoners," and who "destroyed the earth,"—and all of minor state. Attila, Jengis Khan, Aurengzebe, with their vassals: Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, with their battalions: Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, with their disciples: all who ever achieved a name, and all who ever perished without one. None are so great, that they can intimidate: none so little, that they can escape.

And thinking of that mighty throng, there is a distinctive circumstance, which must not be overlooked: "*every man* was judged." In so vast an occasion, in so massive an aggregate—can "every man" there find a place? must "every man" there pass an ordeal? Every man shall there stand apart, bearing his own burden, occupying his own

* In the Hecuba of Euripides, Hades is the name given to Pluto, the mythological god of the lower world. Ἴν' Ἅδης χωρὶς ὠκισαι θεῶν.—Lin: 2.

lot. Every man shall there give the account for himself, and not for another. Every man shall there feel, as though for him alone that trumpet-blast was rung, and that blazing conflagration was kindled, and all that sublime tragedy was performed. Every man shall feel, that he is noticed, that he is espied, and that he must be judged out of these books.

There is sometimes a deception we would practise upon ourselves: we think that we may be lost as in that multitude, confounded as in that crowd. We are "judges of evil thoughts." That objection is refuted; all difficulty is defied. God can say, "All souls are mine;" and all souls, on that day, shall pass in review before Him. Each of your "idle words:" each of your "vain thoughts:" each of your impure desires: every bias of your spirit, every movement of your heart, must reappear. All will germinate afresh: all will develope anew. "For God shall bring every work, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." Then will be understood the full doctrine of consequences, and what is the entail in eternity of all we speak and all we think, and all we desire, and all we transact, in time. "Be sure your sin will find you out."

III. LET US CONSIDER THE PROCESS, WHICH MUST DETERMINE THIS JUDGMENT.

What a suspense have we felt, when we gazed at the flying Scroll! It was written with mourning, lamentation, and woe. When we looked upon the seven-sealed Book! It was covered with awful hieroglyphics. But what were they to these registers, on which all our fates depend?

There is a "book of God's remembrance." It is accommodated language, that we may better understand that nothing is forgotten by Him. "All our members" are in that book; and in that book "are not even our tears?" God "looks upon the heart;" "God requireth that which is past." These are solemn words: "If our heart condemn

us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things." "Thou hast set mine iniquities before Thee, my secret sins in the light of Thy countenance." "Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath."

But that we may more distinctly analyse the figure, let us consider that these books may describe to us the requirements of God's law. When Hilkiah found the law, and read it to the people, they rent their clothes, terror-struck that they had committed so many offences against a long-forgotten law. When brought home by the Spirit,—who rebukes "of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment,"—to the conscience of Saul of Tarsus, a zealot and a persecutor, "sin revived," and, as to all hope and as to all expectation, instantly "he died." Men make very light of God's law, frame their excuses, offer their exceptions; they have little notion, that this law is "holy and just and good," that it is necessary, that it is inevitable, that it results from infinite perfection, that it is the very goodness as well as the rectitude of the Deity which compels it. They have little notion, that it is spiritual in its latitude and comprehensiveness. So that they do not outwardly infringe it, they hold themselves freed from every charge, though they lust in their heart—though they covet in their heart—though their heart comprise every essence and every root of sin. God "without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work." We may "see *under the sun* the place of judgment, that wickedness was there; and the place of righteousness, that iniquity was there." Equity may be warped and truth corrupted among men. But this tribunal is higher than the sun. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" "He is the God of judgment." "He is the God of truth." "But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth." But *then* that book, which is closed to so many, shall "be opened:" shall be opened in all its injunctions,

all its penalties, all its sanctions. You will not then think, that its bands are small; you will not then think, that its terrors are weak. If the law, by one drop of its present fury, one flash of its present power, causes the stoutest heart and the most rebel conscience to quail, how will the stoutest heart be as tow in the fire, and the most rebel conscience be as wax before the flame, when this book shall be opened!—shall be opened in all its contents, shall be opened in all its principles, shall be opened in all its awards!

But are there no witnesses? Let memory answer! Let conscience attest!

Let memory speak. Now, very frequently we feel its weakness in the rapidity of its transitions, and in the crowd of its images. Very much that we have known is effaced; very much of former times and former seasons we cannot recall. Yet have you not felt occasionally, that the past was renewed to you, that you could live it over again? There is a suggestive power, there is an associating principle; and one thing seemed to revive another, and though you had not thought upon it and not dwelt among it for years that had long ceased, you saw it all at once, you felt it all again. And *then*, memory will indeed be a faithful chronicle. Memory will be a living present. What will be the burst of all its lights, what will be the irruption of all its facts, what will be the harvest of all its long-buried seeds! Nothing can be lost; nothing weakened as to impression; nothing overwhelmed in the mass; but every line distinctly drawn, the "jot and tittle" all fulfilled!

Let conscience speak. Life, with many, is but one prevarication with this monitor, and one endeavour to escape from it. And yet they cannot always prevail. Conscience *makes* itself to be heard. There are those who, in spite of themselves, are at this moment "full of the fury of the Lord." Their "hearts meditate terror:" they

"roar for the disquietness of their souls." "The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit who can bear?" When all the arrows are barb-deep in that conscience, when all "the indignation of the Lord" is poured out on that conscience, when the grievous whirlwind of wrath is pressing upon that conscience, oh! it will distort no tale, it will corrupt no testimony. While memory surely tells its facts, conscience will impartially speak its testimonies!

Brethren, such a law is to be opened; and memory will be an unimpeachable witness then, and conscience will be an unimpeachable witness then. How will you meet their report? How will you counterwork their evidence?

But these "books"—(they are many, they are the unwindings of a mighty Volume,)—may refer to the discoveries of the Gospel. And these might indeed cheer, and these ought indeed to fortify, if you have "won Christ and are found in Him." Yet if you are unbelievers still, if you are "enemies in your minds by wicked works," if you are not reconciled unto God, this book, the word of reconciliation, is more portentous in its aspect against you, even than the volume of the law. You will be judged "according to this Gospel." Christ Himself exclaimed, concerning the unbelieving, impenitent, hearer of his word,—"I judge him not; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." All the beseechings of mercy, all the remonstrances of authority, all the pleadings of tenderness!—This book shall be opened only the more terribly to convict and to condemn. Mercy will in that day be more terrible than justice. The Cross will be a sight, which the sinner shall be glad to escape, though by escaping it he sink deeper into the surrounding flame! Calvary will be a spectacle, more horror-smiting to him than the burning heaven and the dissolving world!

Brethren, the law brings its condemnation: it is of its

nature to condemn the sinner; but the Gospel brings its pardon, its reconciliation, its peace: it is of its nature to justify the sinner. Oppose it not—presume not on it. Trifle not with it, lest you die in your sins.

And there is "another book." The thought of it inspires the gladness of the Christian in this awful crisis. He would tremble, "make haste," be "confounded," but for this. It is like the bow in the cloud; it is like the halcyon on the storm. It is "the book of life." Then, if we be enrolled in it, it is an act of grace. If we be enrolled in it, we now present a correspondence of character: we have life in us, it dwelleth in us; for the apostle could say of his companions, "Their names are in the book of life." And if we be enrolled in it, there is in that inscription certainty and guarantee; for it is "the hope of eternal life, which God that cannot lie promised before the world begun." And "the *Lamb's* book of life!" Our names written in His precious blood! It is the record of ineffable blessings: it is the memorial of everlasting obligations. That Name of sacrifice and love lends all its disclosures a perfect excellence, and seals for its enumeration of the saints an imperishable security.

They shall be judged "according to their works." Not as the foundations of their faith, but as its proofs: not as any thing beyond the symptom, the test, and the trial. But "show me," says Christianity now—"show me thy faith by thy works." Christianity, through the lips of its "Author and Finisher," will say the same in judgment to every formalist and every professor: "Show me thy faith by thy works." We shall, therefore, be judged, every one according to our works—the form our character has assumed, the cast our life has taken, "what manner of spirit we have been of,"—what has been the whole state, spirit, practice, of our conduct.

And this is most reasonable. The design of the gospel is to recover us to holiness. All its other blessings are

preparatory and subordinate to our sanctification. This is its sweet influence and professed end. We shall be judged according as this influence has been exerted, and this end has been attained. The enquiry is, whether we have received it or not. This is the test. Judgment is, therefore, the final discrimination between the righteous and the sincere: these being but the outward indexes of faith in Christ or of his rejection. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit." "To the end, he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with his saints."

"I saw a great white throne, and Him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened," said the prophet. He never forgot it. Had we caught a glimpse, surely we could not forget it either. It would be our one thought! Our one care! Our one intent! It would be written upon every wall! It would speak to us in every sound! It would live to us in every scene!

But men say, that it is distant. Distant! "It is appointed unto you once to die;" when will that appointment come? "This night your soul" may be "required of you." "And after death, the judgment." Immediately: not as to its public ratification, but as to its immediate impression and absolute effect. Judgment distant! An hour may place you there. The Lord is at hand. The judge is at the door.

You say, that it is so vast; that so many are included, But your sin is distinct; your spirit stands out from every other spirit that the Divine inspiration ever breathed. And that self, which you understand, however sophists may attempt to puzzle it—that self of yours inheres in you, and lives in you. And it shall be *the*

same: so that if you should awaken up in your thought after thousands and thousands of years, long after eternity has unfolded itself, you will be compelled to say—'I am the very same that I was; this is the same instrument of thinking, that I possessed before; this is the same faculty of feeling, that I possessed before; I remember that world, in which I first received my life; I remember my passage through that world; I am not a transformed being; there is nothing forgotten, nothing evaded, nothing shuffled: I am *the same.* Time is no longer. Judgment is past. Earth is burned! All things are dissolved! But I endure! I am what I was! I was what I am! Nothing wearies that sense! Nothing diverts that consciousness! I am Mine Own Self!' What a thought will that be in eternity, to each one who dies in unbelief, and perishes in rejection of the Saviour! 'I am that unbeliever, and I am bearing the eternal consequences of that my vile infatuated unbelief!'

But you think it inconceivable. "Is it not painted too strongly? are not the colours overcharged?" The sun rose upon Sodom; but the horrible tempest blasted the city ere that noon! There were those, in the days of righteous Noah, who, as he adjusted plank after plank for a hundred and twenty years, taunted and scoffed at him! But the world of the ungodly, notwithstanding, was destroyed. Put not your power to conceive, against the "sayings faithful and true." Say not, "Where is the promise of His coming?" "He is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness"—as you likewise may be counting it! "Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar!"

And now, go to that Saviour, who shall then be the Arbiter and Judge; and bear with you all that you can bear—your poor, your guilty, your miserable, self. Urge—plead the cause of your immortal soul. Say to Him,—'It is unworthy of Thy notice, it is encrusted with a

leprosy of crime, but it is my all; Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me.' Ah! thou needest not tell Him what is thine all; thou needest not tell Him how precious and how invaluable it is to thee as thine all. Has He not died the death? Knoweth He not, that "the redemption of the soul is precious?" Thou hast found thy way, then, to Him, who "receiveth sinners;" who "will in no wise cast out." Thine appeal is to a heart of infinite compassion, and thou must prevail. As thou art "yet a coming," let nothing "throw thee down and tear thee:" or if thine Enemy should thus outrage thee, look but the more fixedly on thy Saviour, call but the more importunately for his help, and hasten but the more swiftly to his feet.

But what if there be those, who determinately resist the overture of mercy, and set themselves against Jesus as a Saviour, and His Spirit as a Sanctifier? Dear Souls! for a moment pause: for a moment bear with me. Did you ever think upon those words—"the wrath of the Lamb?" the wrath, not of "the Lion of the tribe of Judah," but "of the Lamb?" Not the wrath of Him, who goeth forth in His indignation; not the wrath of Him who shall come and not keep silence, while a fire devours before him, and it is very tempestuous round about him; but "the wrath of the Lamb"—the Lamb meek and gentle—the Lamb who was "led to the slaughter"—"the Lamb that was slain." "The wrath of the Lamb!" What! that emblem of compassion, that incarnation of pity—can there be wrath in Him? Wrath in that eye, which wept over the perishing sinner? wrath on those lips, which only spake of kindness and of love? wrath, grasping its bolts with those hands which embraced the infant, blessed the mourner, and were extended on the cross? What meaneth this combination? "The wrath of the Lamb!" Exhausted patience! Inflamed mercy! Incensed love! No

more compassion in infinite compassion! No more love in inexhaustible love! The Cross no more propitiates; the blood of expiation no more speaks of forgiveness; "the door is shut;" the very office of Mediator is abdicated; and now there is left but "the wrath of the Lamb!"

Go to Him, flee to Him, ere that wrath shall be "kindled but a little." One flake of it would consume you; one manifestation of it would destroy you. It will be too late, when all this is realised—to say, "Rocks! fall on us; hills! cover us." "The wrath of the Lamb" pierces all, exasperates all. And though you might conceive of the sternness of the Judge, though you might bear up under the conception of the severity and the vengeance of the Almighty, though a very resistance to these more fearful forms might bring with it a dread, however momentary, relief,—yet even such anticipations are debarred, such supports are denied,—what a hell is reserved for you,—a hell where all is strangely new,—a hell where all is necessarily unmitigated,—not the hell whose everlasting fire is prepared for the devil and his angels,—the fiercer hell,—the deeper hell,—your hell,—the hell that shuts you up for ever, under "THE WRATH OF THE LAMB!"

SERMON XVII.

THE FINAL HEAVEN.

2 Pet. iii. 13.

Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

A Classic Poet,* describing the man of upright and steady purpose, says: "That were a crumbling world to burst around him, the fragments would strike him undismayed." But while we read our Text, this fiction becomes reality, the glowing imagination turns pale and faint before the stronger colours of very fact, the ideal is more than realised in living truth,—and we behold the Christian triumphing amidst the ruins of the universe! He has long awaited the catastrophe. It breaks upon him with no surprise. He looks forth with serene composedness upon it. It as much fulfils his desire as it agrees to his expectation. It is the consummation of his hopes and of his prayers. For this he has even longed. He knew that it must occur, and he has hailed it. But what a Scene is that which he anticipates and welcomes! The trumpet peals its most piercing clangour. Fire seizes upon all with its intensest fury. The mountains are heaped into cinders. The

* "Si fractus illabatur orbis
Impavidum ferient ruinæ."
Horat: Carm: lib. iii. 3.

forests lie scathed in their blackened trunks. The seas evaporate. The works of men, their architecture, their defences, their monuments, are all consumed. The flame catches the skies. They burn. The orbs rush from their tracks. They kindle. Still the conflagration spreads, and every where finds fuel for its rage. It reaches to the largest masses and to the minutest atoms. The heavens can as little resist it as could the parchment scroll. The elements, the most latent particles, the most hidden essences, are fused and melt with fervent heat. The sun is turned into darkness,—the moon into blood,—the stars fall from heaven. Oh the crash of those jostling spheres! The roar of those devouring flames! The outburst of those disimprisoned thunders! Oh that furnace, that storm, that blast, of fire! What marvels of horror are here! What spectacles of awe crowd upon the sight! What could louden the great noise with which the heavens pass away? What could fan into wilder vehemence the fervours in which the elements dissolve? What could heighten the pomps of that great and terrible day of the Lord? That which is still more sublime than all material prodigies! Christian heroism and confidence! The untrembling, the unshaken, saint! Looking for it! Hastening to it! Then calmly surveying it! Not a hope made ashamed! Not afraid with any amazement! Collected in the remembrance, and firm in the assurance, of Divine Promise, he is seen gazing on the new heavens and the new earth which spread above, and which stretch around, him! From the awful pile of ruins, these new-created regions instantly emerge in completest loveliness and glory! Out of the tremendous wreck of all, do the azure of those heavens and the beauty of that earth arise, impossible to all but omnipotence, unexpected to all but faith! There was but one Word between chaos and creation,—there need be but one between the sustentation, and the dissolution, of the universal frame,—there shall be but one

between the last conflagration and those fair and refulgent abodes of existence, which are discovered, certified, and hailed, in these inspired words!

And we are looking for these things! To this promise we hope to come! It is the bound of all further change! It is the goal of consummated bliss! Until that climax, there is always suspense. There awaits a future progress. The living must die. The dying are divided in the integrity of their personal being. The spirit departs into a residence, such as befits spiritual existence. The body is laid in the grave. The spirit anticipates the resurrection of that body. The spirit desires a higher glory consequent upon that resurrection. All hitherto is in gradation and series. But beyond this new habitation of the righteous there is nothing to be expected. It is ultimate. Of this state we would now collect whatever information Scripture gives us. It is most interesting to catch every glimpse of what we shall be for ever, and of the sphere in which we shall for ever dwell.

We suppose that these words relate to the fact of such a final heaven. But as they have been otherwise understood, it is proper that they be more critically considered. Now they most obviously point to a specific, recorded, Promise. It is directly contained in ancient Prophecy. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." * "The new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me." † If these be splendid figures of speech, meaning simply the conversion of mankind to the true faith, we cannot but observe a great singularity in them. It is not for us to assert that they are too vast, for all material symbols, the greatest and most glorious, must be unworthy of such a spiritual transformation. The doubt would arise from the cast of the symbols. Two systems are brought together, the celestial and terrestrial,

* Isa. lxv. 17. † Isa. lxvi. 22.

to denote that which is a holy effect produced in one only. —To this doubt, however, it might be replied, that when Prophecy speaks of sublunary change, in the church or in the nations, this coupling, of heaven and earth, is not infrequent. "Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come." The event to which this prediction pointed has come to pass. "Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain." * The language may thus be paraphrased: 'I will cause great excitement in my Church among the Jews, which may be considered as a heaven in comparison of the great constitutions of men around it, for it is of heaven, while they are of the earth. The same impression shall seize upon them, until the universally hailed Messiah appear. Whatever is of a mere polity, a nationalism, a temporary import, in that Church, being inferior and perishable things such as human art and power produce, shall be removed,—while the truths it proclaims, the blessings it ensures, the excellences it enshrines, shall emerge from every revolution, tower above every shock, aud endlessly endure as divine achievements in which man has neither part to act nor fame to share.' The utmost, however, that this use of the images would prove is, that they are preparatory prophecies to a more sublime fulfilment than that of which they themselves admit, taking the same phraseology in a subordinate sense and for a more special occasion, borrowing like morning-clouds the hues and beams of the yet unrisen sun. For we are informed of all the antecedents to the date of this "Promise." It is *after* "all these things shall be dissolved." It *follows* the great doom which impends

* Heb. xii. 26, 27.

over the present system. Once, ages since, "the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished." It was the judgment of the Deluge. It was no difficult result, because, "by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water." This was its chaotic state. It was easy to reduce it to this. The immense aqueous mass, which had been divided and restrained, burst over it again. "The heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." This is the judgment of the Conflagration. The immense body of hidden and electric fire can readily consume all above and beneath. The latent heat need only become active. Then is the coming of the Lord. It is the coming of the day of God. It is then, *after* this advent, this dissolution, this trial, that "we, according to the promise, look for new heavens and a new earth." If, therefore, other promises in which these terms occur allude to mystical change or ecclesiastical revolution, this must be distinct, for it is only effected at the conclusion of all mundane things, and "the new heavens and the new earth" must be as real as the old which are burnt up. To this interpretation agrees the Apocalyptic scene. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea." No constituent of the old system is left. All that which marked it, such as the great separation of land and water, has disappeared. This catastrophe has attended the erection of "the great white throne." From the face of Him that sat upon it, "the earth and the heaven fled away." "The sea has given up the dead which were in it: and death and hell hath delivered up the dead which were in them: and they have been judged every man according to their works." The new heaven and the new earth now unfold them-

selves.*—It may be objected that this directs our thoughts to earth. For it may be said, that John testifies that he saw "the holy city, new Jerusalem, *coming down* from God out of heaven,"—and that he heard a great voice out of heaven, saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them." Does it not thus appear, it will be asked, that the vision is still of the present state? The Church descends out of heaven from God,—and his Tabernacle is with men. But from *what* heaven does the hovering spectacle stoop? Upon *what* earth does it light? "The first heaven and the first earth are passed away." "The former things are passed away." It is from "the *new* heaven," that it dispreads itself over "the *new* earth." It is the type of the glorified Church, the glorious Church. The answer to every difficulty, we think, will now be felt complete. Every description which accompanies the progressive disclosure of the scene seems demonstrative that the everlasting glory of the saints can only be understood. "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." But among those descriptions a few have been thought incongruous with this view. "The kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it:" but this is only figurative of its royal grandeur,—that all which was resplendent in earthly state is surpassed by it.—"The gates shall not be shut at all by day:" but this is only an elegant expression of its security—that it needs no guard nor defence.—"The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations:" but that is, they are the health, not of the nations as on earth, but the only nations spoken of, "the nations of the saved." From these premisses we may then refute three very general notions.

1. The language of the Text, and of the corresponding vision in the Apocalypse, cannot be prophetic of the

* Rev. xxi. 1, &c.

Christian Church on earth. It describes a state after that Satan has been bound a thousand years and loosed again,—after the battle of Armageddon, the great attack of the apostate world upon the saints,—after the resurrection, the judgment, and the last fire,—after the disruption and disappearance of the firmament and the earth. It is perfectly impossible, then, to deduce from it any theory of physical changes in our planet during the glory of the Latter Day. Be that true or be it unfounded, the opinion can derive no support from this Promise. The sufficient answer is, that this state is subsequent to "the end of all things."

2. This language cannot be of a Mystic character. If in other instances it appears that heaven represents the church, and the earth the unrenewed portion of mankind, yet the very purpose for which some would now apply it to an exalted state of privilege, a millenial period, destroys itself. For what is that blessed condition of things which we anticipate? The people shall be all righteous. All shall know the Lord from the least to the greatest. Will the church then be different from the nations? No,—it will comprehend and absorb them. The new heaven and earth are not unequal and distinct departments, but one œconomy of holiness and bliss.

3. Another class of annotators have supposed that, as destruction, as annihilation, seems no law of divine government, this present world and sky may contain the embryo and rudiment of the glorious system which is thus foretold. This planet is said by Scripture to have been destroyed, to have perished, when it was overflowed by water. Yet really, whatever were its decompositions, it was preserved. So the great igneous, like the diluvian, action may transform it without its utter ruin. It may be the foundation of the sphere of future reward. The new heavens may smile and brighten forth from the ashes of those which now spread over us, and our earth, reno-

vated into more than pristine loveliness, may stand up the abode of equally renovated beings.—Serious difficulties beset this hypothesis. The dimensions of our residence oppose some ground of demur. But let that be overlooked. There is no analogy between the destroying powers of these two judicial agents. Water is plastic, expanding, vegetative. It is a great supporter and habitation of animal life. Fire,—though it does not in strictly philosophical sense annihilate, for there are given forth from its fiercest consumptions other invisible and imponderable forms of matter,—is destructive of all life, produces changes which interfere with the maintenance of all living things; and while it may purify, it is at the expense of whatever outwardly and sensibly subsists. The olive rises beautiful from the deposits of the Flood: of the Fiery Retribution we learn, that "the earth and the works which are therein shall be burned up." Even were it left in a vitrified mass, there seems little fitness in it for all the fair and verdant manifestations which pourtray the celestial state.—If this planet remain as the nucleus of our eternal residence, it must be held by its present laws: it must still move in its orbicular and axine rotations. It must be affected by seasons, by climates, by light and darkness. But in the new heavens and the new earth, "they have no need of the sun neither of the moon." Are all the mechanical powers of the universe, so exactly coinciding with each other in the little and the great, to be reversed to suit this motionless earth,—or is this earth to hang motionless among all that otherwise invariably concentric movement,—or, if still moving, as it does now, shall it be seen, in its celestial appropriation, careering, with an inferior magnitude, and with a common bond, among the sisterhood of planets and the hosts of stars?—If we may construe the language of inspiration with any certainty, we must infer that when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed with flaming fire," this world, in

every substantive idea, shall have ceased. It has terminated. It has "fled away." "No place is found for it." —Whenever there is reference made in Scripture to the future state in its order and locality, we are described as going forth, and departing hence, migrating to a different sphere. "But they which shall be counted worthy to obtain *that world.*" "The dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we which remain alive shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." These passages certainly carry away our ideas from whatever is terrestrial, to some "land which is far off," to the proper abode of Jesus Christ. The House not made with hands is eternal in the heavens, while the earthly house of our tabernacle shall be dissolved. And then may we enquire: For what reason, the true heaven should be transferred to this place of our present abode? There is now a Heaven: the high and holy place: God's holy heaven: where Christ is. Whatever changes have been admitted into it, and may be still admitted,—whatever may be necessary to "prepare that place for us,"—why should it be abandoned for this our humbler habitation? Why should it bend to this field of space?

But the disposal of these questions, leads to a last. The present heaven *might* suffice for the introduction of the risen saints. Holy materialism subsists in it, and would meet a large portion of their wants and capacities. The Incarnate God has his dwelling in it: two human bodies, at least, are found already there. Why should it be displaced for another? Some answers may occur. Since the universal character of its created inhabitants, with these exceptions, is now unmixedly spiritual, it may be conceived that the *peculiar* adaptation of this heaven does not commend itself to a corporeal kind of existence. The corporeal susceptibility may not be as fully provided for as is the immaterial. The exceptions might the rather

confirm this idea. For Enoch and Elijah are in all likelihood themselves prepared bodily for the spiritualities of the scene. But when all holy spirits shall be reembodied, it does seem probable that this great progression in their being shall be accompanied by an adequate and counterpart change of abode, that the palace shall be enriched in proportion to the augmented dignities of its royal guest.—Heaven as it is now revealed to us, is not only a seat of bliss but of suspense. It is filled with aspirations towards better things. Its happy spirits are intent upon a more glorious hereafter. A consummation, which is never doubted, is still delayed. To that fulfilment a new heaven may be supposed to form itself : a more suitable sphere may be moulded for that more exalted perfection.—The Mediation of Christ, that part of it which consists in his Priestly Intercession and his Regal Headship, selects the present heaven for its Temple and its Throne. He hath obtained an excellent ministry, and the heavenly places are its courts. We recognise the ark, the altar, the victim, the censer, the laver, the smoke, the blood. There is subserviency to a Dispensation still in force. That dispensation, of which the Saviour is the Supreme Director, and whose centre is in the excellent glory, shall at last reach its end. "The Son shall have delivered up the kingdom to God even the Father." That dispensation having been conducted among redeemed spirits in their allotted dwelling-place, it might be presumed that its glorious issues will be celebrated in some more intensely celestial development, worthy of their higher appreciation and their mightier strain.—A series of vicissitudes appears to affect the minds of the saints made perfect. What passes on earth seems to be reflected upon them. The medium of their acquaintance with it we cannot determine. The condition of the Church below is the subject of their deepest interest. There are souls which cry with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true,

dost Thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?" Yet must we not suppose agitation and impatience. They know, for they learnt the lesson while on earth, that it is "good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation of the Lord." Amidst all their emotions "it is said unto them that they should rest yet for a little season." More often are they ascertained to rejoice. "There were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ." "I heard a great voice of much people in heaven, saying, Alleluia; Salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God: For true and righteous are his judgments." "Rejoice over her, Thou heaven, and ye holy apostles and prophets." That glorious state, as though sometimes darkened and jarred by mortal sorrows and collisions, may ultimately be lost in that which is more transcendent and supernal; where even the earthly guest, if such there were, caught up thither, could know no suspense, mark no ominous wonder, nor "weep much,"—across which no shadow of an evil world could pass!

This State of blessedness is, then, distinct from all that preceded it: and when we read of the new heavens and the new earth, we must not divide them,—for were we to speak of *heaven*, in its happy sense, all this is heaven,—the perfect and the last. But as they who dwell on earth behold the firmament above and around them,—as it is a part of our system necessary for life and for our most agreeable sensations and ideas, so these new heavens are to the new earth, which is the real abode, as its skies, its lights, its atmosphere, its medium of vision and harmony, swelling in their mighty dome over the earth beneath, and that earth filled with its architecture of precious ores and gems,—one vast city containing its multitudes of the saved and resplendent in the abundance of its glory.

Now scarcely can this be regarded as imagery. "In

the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." That one creation, as roof and floor, is our present abode. It is to pass away, and there shall be seen a new celestial canopy, and a new abiding place, for the raised and glorified saints. They answer to "this building," but are infinitely more elaborate. The original type may still be traced, but it is amidst a consummate workmanship and a crowning magnificence.

I. LET US ENDEAVOUR, FROM THIS DESCRIPTION, TO SUGGEST TO OUR MINDS THE TRUE NATURE OF THAT PERFECT FELICITY AND SATISFACTION WHICH ARE RESERVED FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD.

There is a Residence which they shall call their own, brighter than any known heaven, more lovely than any known earth,—a pavilion, as though it had a firmament for its curtains and a world for its foundations, yet the one of richer texture than the star-woven skies, yet the other of firmer stability than the everlasting hills.

In the present heavens and earth there are diversified powers and objects,—for pleasure and for pain, for good and for evil, for safety and for harm. There are healthy and there are noxious elements. New heavens and a new earth are foreshown: then whatever is now excellent shall be inconceivably enhanced, and whatever is injurious shall be entirely removed.

—We may pursue the reflections which rise out of similitude and comparison. In our heavens is there not something great? Something of augury and emblem to unveil eternal things? Something which raises us beyond ourselves? A beautiful marvel? An unwearying spectacle? An awful mystery? A vision real as bright and lasting? How they refine the imagination which wanders through them! How they attune, as with their own music, the minstrelsy which sings of them! How they enlarge the enquiry which studies them! They are made for meditation! Man, as he gazes on them, seems to

mingle with them and his soul to grow into them! What is so far above, so unutterably high, so dazzling, so vast, so alluring, as the heavens? That arch studded with its orbs and garnished with its constellations? Its mighty expanse, its gorgeous mechanism, its harmonious order? Now like a symbolic web, then a regal embroidery! Now like an embossed shield, then a molten mirror! Now like the cupola of a temple, then the pavement of a palace!—"The heavens declare the glory of God: and the firmament showeth his handy-work. One day telleth another: and one night certifieth another. There is neither speech nor language: but their voices are heard among them. Their sound is gone out into all lands: and their words into the ends of the world. In them He hath set a tabernacle for the sun: which cometh forth as a bridegroom out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a giant to run his course. It goeth forth from the uttermost part of the heaven, and runneth about unto the end of it again." * Those skies are for a tent to dwell in. "Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them." Their lights are for signs and for seasons and for days and for years. They mark our time, and guide us in our going out and our coming in. There is always faithful witness in them. Precious are the things of heaven. There are formed the rains and the dews. In the aëreal system is the source of life and health and vigour. Precious are the fruits brought forth by the sun and precious things are put forth by the moon. The stars twinkle not in vain. Where could we turn our weary, weeping, eyes, but to the sweet influences which are shed upon us, but to the fair beams which shine before us, from those eyes of heaven? When we look away from earth, vexed with its cares and distracted with its crimes, it is more than poetic sentiment which the sight of that celestial vault inspires, and more than fanciful delight

* English Prayer-Book Translation.

which it affords. Where could we fan and calm our heavy, burning, brow but with the gales which breathe from thence? The clouds of heaven are not the least of its delectable things. How rich are the reflections of their endless dyes! How manifold are their forms! At one time they sleep as the lake, again they surge as a sea: here they unfold into the peaceful arbour, there they stand an embattled host: they seem to constitute a very land of their own, the birth-place of the rainbow, the womb of the morning, the theatre of heaven, the path-way of the sun, the escutchioned and trophied bier of the departing day. We were created to look upward, and the heavens teach us why.—And is not ours a joyous world? Manifold are its charms. It is given to the children of men. It is changed, indeed, from what it was, but the primitive outline is not blotted out. The vestiges of its higher condition, at different intervals reappear. Though many are its ruins, they are monumental. The flowers of Eden still grow wild. The fountains of Paradise still run truant. How obedient is its soil! How tractable are its lower tribes! How variegated are its stored gratifications! What melodies are in its woods and waters! What hues bathe its horizon at the dawn and sunset! When Spring walks forth and renews the face of the earth, and scatters her blossoms and paints her tints, and the vegetation again mantles, and the foliage again teems, and the little hills rejoice on every side,—when Autumn crowns the year with goodness, and scatters out plenty from her horn, and gives seed to the sower and bread to the eater, and all the trees of the field clap their hands,—then do we feel that God is in those seasons, that He doeth all these things, that they are His riches of which the earth, and the great and wide sea, are full,—that all the laws and cycles of this world are but His open hand and but His tender mercies! He has not forsaken the earth. But refulgent as is the concave above us, and exuberant as is

the earth at our feet, we "look for new heavens and a new earth." There shall be a more beautiful and august firmament, not decorated with the glory of the sun and the glory of the moon and the glory of the stars, not filled to mark out the revolutions of time, not perishable itself but resting on its own moveless pillars, that which is designed to proclaim the notations of eternity, that which shall be spread forth over our endless home. There shall be a more durable and more lovely earth, a more appropriate abode, a more worthy stage of life and action, a sphere in which we shall live and move and have our being more intensely and perfectly, where all that is now pictured shall be fulfilled, in which the brightest splendour and garniture of the present shall be only remembered as the shadows of that which there is realised, that archetype of whatever is now to be enjoyed, and admired, and loved!

—We may follow the reflections which arise out of difference and contrast. The heavens which now cover us are often charged with elements of trouble and danger. Judgment is heard from them. They may be unfurled as a hostile banner. They are often shrouded in an impenetrable shade. The sun may smite us by day and the moon by night. The stars may fight against us. Strong wind, lightning, vapour, may deal out death. Fire runs along the ground. Mildew and blasting may load the air. We may inhale an atmosphere of disease and pest.—Earth tells us not of unmixed bliss. Thorns and briers are its spontaneous growth. As is the earthy, such are they that are earthy. We are made out of its ground and built up from its dust. Mortality is the law of all its inhabitants. Exhausting are its toils and cares. Moral corruption has seized upon it. "It is polluted." Every atom of it may be converted into a means of destruction and a weapon of wrath. Poisons abound in it. There are beasts of prey. It may heave beneath us and swallow us up quick. Like

the house of the leper, the vein of sin frets into our dwelling, defiling and destroying it. There any many things for which it is disquieted and which it cannot bear. The heavens and the earth are each beneath a fearful doom. They rise up before us as an awful pile. They await but the torch. They are reserved unto fire. The trail of the Old Serpent every where is discerned. The Prince of the power of the air has now a mysterious lodgment in these elements. He who is the angel of the bottomless pit, Abaddon, Apollyon, is the prince and god of this world. It is the rallying place, the citadel, of whatever evil is in the universe. It is the battlement behind which sin protects itself, and from which it attacks all purity, goodness, and truth. Here we have no continuing city. The world passeth away. All is vanity.—New heavens and a new earth must reverse the evil characteristics and properties of the present system. We turn from those we know to those which we anticipate. In that firmament there shall be no storm, no blight, no scathe. Neither shall the sun light on us, nor any heat. And that earth! No violence shall be found in it, nor jar, nor deadly thing. And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity: they are as the angels of God. The love of that world brings no snare and involves no guilt. When man now dies, he returns to his earth: but that earth lies not under the dominion of death. Pain and sorrow, sighs and tears, are unknown to it. It is the realm of eternal life. How little is there in this our residence which such a future abode must not abrogate and contradict!

But there are more specific indications in words like these.

1. The scene we occupy was evidently intended for a great system of life. There is scarcely spot or element in which it may not be found. It is a great contrivance for all the forms and kinds of existence. It would be un-

meaning, running to waste, sinking into decay, but for this intention. Air, land, water, are crowded with their several tribes. The happiness of every one is consulted, function and habitude agree most perfectly with the province and support provided for them, and none who survey and reason out the final causes of things can doubt the will of the Great Master and Lord of all. Still *he* who was made the last of all earthly creatures, is the greatest: to him they are all tributary and ministering: and God has given him dominion over them. His creation alone can explain theirs. Their career seems idle but as directed for his service or his warning. He stands forth as the solution of whatever is otherwise perplexingly obscure. Man was not constituted for this heaven and earth, but this heaven and earth were constituted for man. Their mysterious Sabbath was hushed into its stillness and hallowed into its rest for him. All animal types and germs meet in his form. He is the pattern which all that is wonderful in sentience, in organization, in instinct, just so far approaches. He can explore the heavens. He can scan the earth. He is its rightful proprietor and its proper resident under the charter of the Only Potentate. "For thus saith the Lord that created the heavens; God himself that formed the earth and made it; he hath established it, he created it not in vain, he *formed it to be inhabited.*" Then, assuredly, when there shall be new heavens and a new earth, man, the capital figure of the present system, shall still be more prominently raised. He shall there need for help no inferior creatures. Their spirit has gone downward to that earth which is no more. But he is not alone. The ministering spirits which ministered to the heirs of salvation during this life shall be their companions amidst these fairer fields. They may tend them still, drawing their attention to brighter and brighter spectacle, and showing them fountain after fountain of living water.

But not angelic being is most predominantly marked. Human Nature is the exhibited interest and genius of the place. Its restoration, its redemption, its glorified perfection, fix the admiration of all other holy beings. They contemplate in it the subject and trophy of an unexampled grace. They see a mighty ruin retrieved. They rejoiced over one sinner that repented while there was space to repent: now they witness the fruits and works of that repentance, a repentance unto life. They behold the countless multitude rescued from Destruction, from their mischievous perversion, from their deep disgrace. And that the nature of the fallen creature may be aggrandised beyond all comparison, it is that which the Second Person of the glorious Trinity has united to himself. Immanuel has taken it on him. He became incarnate that he might offer himself a sacrifice for sin, and he is now honoured and exalted in that Incarnation. Only is He, by this change, the Lamb! It is rewarded, glorified, enthroned! Lo! What has manhood become! How is it awfully raised! How is it infinitely dignified! The seraphim veil their faces before the God-Man! The principalities and powers and dominions yield to them who can claim their own humanity on the Seat of Supreme Divinity! They give place to them for whom these new heavens and this new earth are prepared! Their lower rank in this recently constituted dwelling, is higher than their pre-eminence in that state of which they were native spirits! It is more joyous here to be the least than there to have been the greatest! The Deity is by this means revealed to them as it never could be before! They draw nearer! They gaze more confidently! They repine not that a later, and once an inferior, creature is preferred! The younger brother is come! The prodigal has returned! He that was dead is alive again, and he that was lost is found! There is a more vivid gladness in such a recovery, though themselves had needed no repentance! They

adore the mercy which has furnished this habitation, and appropriated it to them who are "redeemed from among men!" These are the sons who are brought to this glory! These are the heirs of this paternal home! These are the entitled claimants who shall people the realms than which eternity can unfold nothing more divinely worthy and sublime! That land shall never be forsaken of its inhabitants: they are immortal as itself! The new heavens and earth would be lost to every design which their names suggest, unless they were full of life, and that the life of man!

2. The world in which we dwell, with all its proper appendages of circumambient air and supernal light, is a material fabric. It is strictly conformed to all the laws, it completely developes all the properties, of that form of subsistence. Fluids,—gaseous, inappreciable, are not less reducible to this category than the granite rock. All is extended, resistive, measurable, holding its undivided and undisplaced position. Whatever is material must be related to space. It is somewhere. Taken away, it leaves a proportionate void. Our only experience of matter is in this portion of Creation. Here exclusively can we form its proper idea. The heavens and the earth furnish us also with our only notion of space. If, therefore, new heavens and a new earth shall be constituted, they must be material and related to space, or the figure does not hold. And every thing concerning that abode would seem to confirm it. It has its entrances, its dimensions, its boundaries, that which can be "shown," that which may be "heard." The flesh of the risen saints is seen in those borders. The Glorious Body of the Eternal Son is the centre of all the beatific attractions and influences. We should refine away, we should subtletise into vagueness, all our most realised conceptions, were we to think of this future simply as a state. A state, thus predicated, supposes a being who is the subject of it. A created being

cannot be omnipresent. He must be related, by some law, to a particular material condition. If the spirit of a corporeal agent, he must be related to that body: that body must be related to a fixed point in its excursive transitions. We now think of this hereafter by the symbolism of the actual and the present. A new heaven and a new earth must somewhat correspond to the tangible things above and around us. We think they cannot be of opposite elements or of opposite relations. Then may we confidently announce that they have such an existence as we understand when we would denote that which our external senses now ascertain and now allocate. It is a high, it may be an attenuated, materialism, answering to the idea of the spiritual body: it may be less gross and obtrusive than any with which we are acquainted: but it is not less truly and substantively a subject and series of all such phænomena. There is nothing debased or sinful in them,—they consisted with a holy structure and an unfallen creature: and "in the generations" of the "new heavens and earth" we shall only see matter and space reclaimed to their highest use and purest destiny.

3. The visible works of God are the means by which intelligent creatures rise in their thoughts to Him, and judge of him. These are the monuments of His existence and natural perfections. "For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead." We see the most extraordinary indications of wisdom and benignity in all that we call Nature. Adaptation is the universal law. If we speak of the firmament, how is apparent irregularity redeemed and momentary aberration indemnified, where these are seen to be the very niceties of contrivance and provision! If we speak of the human frame, what a mechanism is unfolded in adjustments which no human art could attempt and no human foresight could anticipate, to each socket

and flexion, to each filament and pore. Nor less do we find that the tender mercies of Deity are over all his works. The stores which he provides for every living thing declare his goodness, and yet there is a tenderness which is more exquisite than all. We trace it in the protective instincts of the feeblest, in the parental yearning which every where soothes and tends the earliest sorrow and helplessness of life, in the joy of which all the humblest kinds partake. Heaven and earth but vary and multiply the perfect demonstration of a First Cause, his skill, his might, and his bounty. When we read, consequently, of "the new heavens and the new earth," we cannot fail to infer that they shall be impressed with the same designations. They who dwell in them shall peruse the signatures of an infinite glory still. Manifestations such as we now contemplate shall not be blotted out, save to be written in more resplendent characters. The operations of the Divine power shall not be forgotten amidst the higher proceedings of the Divine government. They are blended into one song; "Great and marvellous are Thy *works*, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy *ways*, thou King of saints." How shall the depths of those heavens, how shall the ever-spreading horizons of that earth, be "sought out," and "considered," and mused, and interpreted, for the praises of Him whose glorious majesty shines forth from their incomparable Frame!

4. The community of the saints is now a most pleasing fact: they are one. They have a mutual bond. We all feel what that is: "all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours." But widely are they scattered abroad. They are driven among all nations. The world does not contain them. It is but the birth-place of their regeneration. When they die, their spirits pass into the intimate presence of Christ. There they abide as perfectly blessed as spirits can be in their bodily deprivation. They are separated

from many, for a time, whom they loved on earth. Many have sprung up, and are now springing, in the church below, whom they have never known. All are hastening to one place. New and still newer companies are meeting in it. But the time of the full gathering has not come. It may be that some shall never there be seen. They who do not die, but only shall be changed, will not need that intermediate rest, nor will the suddenness of their transformation admit of it. The recognition of the saints in their full and distinct identity depends, also, upon the resurrection. Where shall all the people of God be found? They never yet dwelt, except they were members of the *first* family, in the same world. They never yet were seen at once. A new heaven and a new earth shall now embrace their whole multitude. God hath prepared a habitation for them. They are all brought home. "None of them is lost." They are not dispersed in distant receptacles, but as earth with its heaven expresses one abode and one œconomy, so are they all now enclosed in one system of perfect relationship and intercourse, going in and out among each other,—walking as nations with their proper peculiarities, or as those who were nations but are distinct no more, in that celestial light,— one in joy, one in song, one in interest, the Commonwealth and Intercommunity of all the redeemed.

5. While the present state of our sojourn abounds in multitudinous life, while it is chiefly administrative to the life of man, we cannot but be amazed at the contrivance and the fulness of those provisions which give general life, and peculiarly that of man, its greatest possible happiness and freest possible exercise. All of death reminds us of it by necessarily presupposing it. The heavens and the earth lend it continued support; ever varying its emotions, ever quickening its joys. Their breezes and their streams, seasons, products, climates, all promote the vitalities which swarm in every element and

every nook. We, however, boast a life of higher functions and aims. To be spiritually-minded is life and peace. The Spirt of life breathes it into our soul. Though the sky and earth cannot affect this new mode of being, this life of faith, yet the passions and concernments of the present do war perpetually with it. This world offers no congenial sphere for it, save for its power of contest, its opportunity of endurance, its test of strength. But "the new heavens and the new earth" shall as much favour the inward life, the life of the spirit, as these mundane conveniences and laws now sustain our inferior life. In that extra-mundane region, what will be its blessed helps and resources! What air shall it inhale! On what fruits of the tree of life shall it feed! It is life more abundantly, it is the intensest essence of life,—it is life in its range and expatiation,—it is life in its unwearying activities,—it is life circling within itself,—it is life incessantly renewing its youth,—it is life eternal!

6. If the future condition of happiness and glory, which shall be prepared for the redeemed, may be thus expressed, we may expect that, notwithstanding the difference between it and "this visible, diurnal sphere," there shall be certain points of resemblance. Willingly we forego the thought of whatever arises out of imperfection, out of animal wants and relations. "They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more." "Meats for the belly and the belly for meats: but God shall destroy both it and them." "They neither marry nor are given in marriage." But matter is the same, corporiety is the same, mind is the same. What are now the marks of our dwelling? Heavens,—earth. How is our eternal abode described? New heavens,—new earth. Is not there in the former an analogue to the latter? Is not the second the reflex of the first? Was there not a shadowing out of ideas which shall seem familiar to the saints in that glory? That which is inferior in appetite and instinct is done away.

But is there no beauty in form and colour which the eye may behold? Are there no ravishing harmonies for the ear? It may be said, that this implies the existence of light and its prismatic laws; of air and its mechanical impulsions. The same effects might be produced by other media: but we see nothing improbable in the retention of these elements. They are forms or conditions of matter, but they are the most ethereal. We may believe, therefore, that our future being shall not reverse all our known ideas and feelings, but that it shall rather supply their refinement and augmentation. Every thing here may be but rudiment and cypher, to be evolved and interpreted in far distant seats of the universe. By a graduated scale we may now rise, through an ascending series of progressive changes, until we reach the climax of all.

7. But this supposed parallelism, however unequal, between these different scenes of existence, comprehends an exercise of distinct and perfect memory. The language which borrows figures from our system to signify "the life which is to come," which takes our heavens and earth to adumbrate the final bliss of believers, makes certain that there shall be a constant reference from the future to the past. The "terrible crystal" of the new heavens, the fair paradise of the new earth, must recall the old. Were it designed that all should be forgotten, no suggesting cause, no associating link, would be introduced, nor be suffered to linger in the mind of the redeemed. Every memento would certainly be withdrawn. But how much of that blessedness thus would be destroyed! The recollection of sin, and that they once were sinners, alone explains the grace which abounded to them, and alone inspires them to sing the praise of its glory. They must revert to the trials and conflicts of their sublunary discipline, to understand their triumphs now that they have overcome. The retro-

spect of kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation, in the anthem of their redemption, shows that nothing of their moral history is obliterated from their spirits. Still they look to the rock whence they were hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence they were digged. And still they regard the holy haunt, the pious home of the departed earth. "The pleasant things" and scenes of "a worldly sanctuary" live in their memory still. "And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her. The Lord shall count when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there." The everlasting records of their former selves are engraven on these celestial monuments of a perished world. All revives with them. All attaches to them. The ancient heavens and earth speak by these. There is reflected from them the vivid image of whatever by its precedent or its foil can increase celestial delights.

8. The manner in which the present heavens and earth are supplanted by the new, declares that a measure of happiness is ensured by the exchange which perfectly corresponds to the solemn revolution. Joy is the invariable fruit of a rightly appreciated Christianity. Amidst terrestrial sorrows and temptations this joy is the believer's strength. It is unspeakable and full of glory. It is his token and badge, to be happy in God. He triumphs in Christ. Yet it finds a limit. His present conditions are too weak for its transport, and often fail beneath it. The lot of earth is too confined, too infirm, too sinful, to contain its perfect fulness. The weight of glory would overpower the creature of flesh and blood, and would ill befit the world of contest, strife, and sin. Were there not some better portion, some brighter reversion, other scenery need not be sought. But there is a reward for which this is unsuited, and of which it is unsusceptible. And in "looking for the new heavens and the new earth," we must consider them as, not only the types, but the

means, of a sublime satisfaction with which the noblest enjoyments, that religion can now inspire, may not be compared.

9. Nothing more distinctly marks the evil of sin, than the variance which is often supposed in Scripture between man and the scenes of his habitation. These are bid to rise up and declare against him. He is represented as alone "coming short of the glory of God." They are true to their first purpose, while he has turned aside from the end for which he was created and endowed. Hence those awful apostrophes with which inanimate objects are invoked, as if even they could but condemn him. They are summoned, like so many witnesses and justices, to denounce his crimes. "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth!" "Be astonished, O heavens, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate!" Therefore does the Almighty Creator call to them. They are weary, according to these descriptions, of sustaining our guilty race. "The earth is defiled under the inhabitants thereof." He himself complains of the abuse to which his own sustentation of these things is turned. "Thou hast made me to serve with thy sins." "Behold, I am pressed under you, as a cart is pressed that is full of sheaves." A taint is upon all His earthly works. They are wrested from Him. They are the unwilling instruments of our rebellion. We contradict and debase them. The rebuke is in their order against our disorder, in their quiet against our disturbance, in their peace against our war. They retain their allegiance. They are still on the side of God. He causes judgment to be heard from heaven. The earth trembles at his presence. It is the Lord's. But "the new heavens and earth" shall environ nothing which can offend. They shall correspond with whatever they embrace. Their pure elements shall only encompass the pure. Their inhabitants shall walk in them with undeviating sympathy. Every use shall be pursued. Every

lesson shall be learnt. Every design shall be fulfilled. That glorious creation shall smile upon all who people it, and shall rejoice that, in them, its blessed skill and power are perfectly explained. "The heavens shall declare His righteousness, and all the people shall see his glory." "The skies shall pour down righteousness." "The earth shall bring forth salvation." And so even now, when there is a holy cause and a holy people on the earth, the system of Nature is required to manifest its gladness. "Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad." "Sing, O ye heavens, for the Lord hath done it: shout ye lower parts of the earth!" All these His works were reared for the sake of Human redemption. They were prepared for the saints. "And I have put my words in thy mouth, and I have covered thee in the shadow of mine hands, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people." How shall that heaven and that earth, in which this people shall for ever dwell, exult with them,—not as here over their avengement, but in the triumphs and beatitudes of which they partake, and to which themselves so abundantly minister.

10. Since heaven and earth combine all our ideas of the fair and grand, since these complete our present sphere of life and action, the continuance of such machinery in a future state must intimate to us the diversity of its good. Herein is every constituent of our pleasure, whether sensuous or intellectual. From above, or beneath, we derive all our gratifications. There is endless variety. Our compound being is not forgotten, but sentience and mind are alike addressed and cherished. The well-known sources of our temporal good shall more than be restored. The Lord shall be our everlasting light, and our God our glory. There is heaven to which we may lift our eye, and earth on which it may repose. All attractions are contained in the one or the other. And does

not this renovation of heaven and earth declare the completeness of celestial delight, and the union of all its essentials? There are spirit and body,—contemplation and activity,—complacency and usefulness,—deep consciousness and rapturous flight,—inner life and boundless association,—all powers and all affections,—height and depth,—centre and circumference,—wide as the expanse of heaven, variegated as the beauties of earth. "At Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore!"

11. We have no such images of permanence as those works of God concerning which we speak. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." "They shall fear Thee as long as the sun and moon endure." "The earth abideth for ever." God suspends the proof of his faithfulness upon these ordinances, upon the covenant of day and night. Yet are we forewarned of their wreck. "They shall perish; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment." "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved, and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll." "Heaven and earth shall pass away." We are assured of that which is more lasting than they. "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath: for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment: but my salvation shall be for ever, and my righteousness shall not be abolished." If, then these monuments of whatever is durable are themselves to be destroyed, if the azure fade and the globe decay, how certainly may we regard, in the new heavens and earth, the voucher of a proper immortality! Their sun shall no more go down. Their refulgent tissues shall not decay. They are the perfect signals of a duration which admits no intervals and wants no monitors,—which cannot be broken into ages nor counted out by stars!

12. The power of God to protect and bless is not infrequently rested upon his creative achievements. "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and

earth." "The Lord that made heaven and earth, bless thee out of Zion." "Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, which made heaven and earth." "Ah Lord God! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee." The mourner, the oppressed, the persecuted, have sought unto Him who had done all these things,—his aid and benediction they could not henceforth distrust nor slight. The meek of the earth were safe beneath the care of Him who made it. They, upon whose tears only the heavens looked, found their relief in Him that had stretched them abroad. The new heavens and earth are fashioned by the same Omnipotent Artificer, the God of truth and of salvation, and in the same manner does he design that they should support the quietness and assurance of his people for ever! He who reared them shall be their God so long as they endure. They are the standard evidence and voucher of what he can and will work on their behalf. As we now appeal to these skies and to these mountains, to these doings of God, to justify our utmost hope and confidence, so shall the saints survey and interpret the glorious wonders which encircle them with the same necessary inference and infallible construction. How safely shall they abide, how beatifically shall they exist, whose safeguard and gladness are secured by incorruptible heavens and earth, amidst which God is all in all!

Yet these are but intimations which we seize. We believe them well warranted conclusions. But amongst them we speedily are lost. We cannot realise them. They overpower and confound. Though the similitudes be borrowed from our most familiar impressions, yet are they but feeble helps to our minds. We must still exercise our simplest faith. It is like a second process. "Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made

of things which do appear." In like manner we must believe that at the voice of Him who shall say, "Behold I make all things new," a cerulean shall suddenly beam forth, a verdure shall suddenly rise up, of which the heavens and the earth, which now are, furnish not the very image but only the dim shadow and feeble germ!

Two descriptions, however, are given, which aid our ideas. The first is doubtless figurative. It pourtrays the future state as a city of mighty boundaries, of gorgeous structures, of golden streets,—of walls and gates and foundations, built with the most beautiful and precious stones,—the palatial residence of the Church, the sanctified Bride,—no Temple rising in it, because the Presence of the Deity is immediate and direct and every where suffused,—all brightening beneath an unsetting day,—diversified, amidst this unfolded stateliness and grandeur and royalty of pile and tower, with the fertility and living water of an Eden, the pure river clear as crystal, the tree of life,—a city and a grove,—a blending of a Jerusalem and a Paradise!*—But the second description is more distinct. Our Text presents it: "Wherein dwelleth righteousness." The corresponding Description repeats the same: "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth." We are not able to understand the splendours which shall mantle those heavens, nor the plants and bowers of that earth,—but this may be conceived. There *was* a heaven, but righteousness did not *dwell* there. There *was* an earth, but righteousness did not *dwell* in it. Angels rebelled. Man fell. Holy loyalty has not found until now, its chosen abode and changeless home. In its greatest trials and in its largest scenes, it

* Rev. xxii. 1, &c. A wrong punctuation has introduced a confusion, which is by no means in the passage. Thus it should be composed: "And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb in the midst of the street of it. And on either side of the river was there the tree of life."

had wavered and failed. At last it has entered its own sphere, it has obtained its just claim and security. It has room in which to dwell safely. It is not as something strange, a visitation,—it strikes an indigeneous root, it breathes a native air. Only the faultless stand before the throne! The holy are renewed and confirmed in indefectible purity! They cannot sin! They adorn those heavens, shining as the brightness of the firmament and as the stars for ever and ever! They enrich that earth, rising as pillars on which is written the name of God, and the name of the city of their God, and,—added to all, is inscribed by the Saviour his "new name." Happiness, in all thy forms, thou art there! Love in all thy ties, thou art there! Devotion, in all thine ardours, thou art there! Melody, in all thy chords, thou art there! But ye follow in the train of that which is greater than you all! Righteousness shall go before you, and shall set you in the way of its steps! Righteousness has there built its dwelling-place, and throws open the portals for all that is kindred to it! Like Him, in whom it only perfectly and necessarily exists, it shall inhabit eternity!

Our future happiness being thus compared to an earth yielding its increase with its sweet æther, with its hemisphere of glorious lights,—we are described as looking for the evolution of the scene. The ground of this confidence must be considered.

II. Let us examine the evidence on which this firm expectation rests.

To Abraham a covenant was given, in which were contained many promises of a more than earthly kind. He had the seal of righteousness by faith. From him was to descend a spiritual seed. He and his patriarchal posterity saw not in any land of our globe their inheritance: they sought "a better country, that is, an heavenly." Beneath this broad and continuous and irreversible covenant we might plead our right. We are

blessed with him. They without us cannot be made perfect. We seem led forth with the father of the faithful and to hear the Voice, Look now towards heaven! We believe in the Lord, and he counteth it to us for righteousness! We take this ancient warrant, which no time can impair nor cancel,—a warrant distinct, successive, cumulative,—and "according to His promise we look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness."

Other quotations have been already gathered from prophecy,—of the very same language and metaphor, and in them may be found the seed of this thought and the earnest of this hope,—until the language and the metaphor are by later descriptions unspeakably simplified and aggrandised, swelling like new visions upon us, always the more defined as they are the more expanded, until they all combine into one pledge, but that like the many-coloured bow of heaven, and we "according to promise look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness."

Christianity, which brings life and incorruption to light, which is the promise of eternal life, exhibits the true and alone hope of this surpassing condition. We may give doctrine all the weight and warmth of inspired forecast, not only reasoning on it but delighting in its presentiment and augury,—we may even read in precept a voucher of this future, and draw from it fresh yearnings towards it,—and while the gospel compresses and sums up itself into a compact assurance, we according to this promise, concentrated from the whole, "look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness."

Whether the Promise be constructive or literal, have respect to strains of verbal resemblance or to general deductions from Christianity,—its force is still the same, unless indeed that, being the conclusion upon the entire

Word of Life, its intensity be so much increased. We have everlasting consolation and good hope through grace. We depend upon the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began.

Promise is a form of Scriptural revelation and encouragement with which we are familiar. It is an infinite condescension in God thus to bind himself, and to speak to his servants, "for a great while to come." "There are given to us exceeding great and precious promises." Their faithfulness is their first and common character. "They are all Yea and Amen in Christ Jesus." Their compass and variety are as ample and as applicable as the mental and outward trials which Christians can ever know. They pass on from age to age unexhausted, and those of one dispensation are transmitted to another in larger meaning and wider scope. The original testament is cleared by new codicils and is enriched by more munificent bequests. "Having these promises," we thread our earthly journey, instructed for each strait and vexation,—for no conflict unfurnished, for no exigence unprepared.

But, then, Promise has hitherto only been fulfilled amidst sorrows of earthly vicissitude. These, being known, can be borne. In enduring them, though we need every holy support, we are still surrounded with the sensible scenes which were always familiar to us. These heavens tell us whither the spirits of our friends have soared, and this world yet contains their dust. We gaze upon the same landscape and same sky which we beheld in joy, and now explore in grief. It is the same house, though it is a house of mourning. The only change is in ourselves. The stars and the flowers may seem to assume another aspect: the stars to twinkle with tears, the flowers to droop in the fragrance of their sighs. It is an idle fancy. We look upon the same objects. And powerful as is the influence of Divine Promises upon our minds, the simple faith which regards them is not so signalised,

because we can yet look forth upon many of the elements of their fulfilment. God judges. He makes a way. He sends a deliverance. In the mount of the Lord shall it be seen.

The Promise, however, of which we speak, depends upon no such test. It is not some provision for this mortal life. It is not capable of any present demonstration. It supposes the ruin and transition of all that we have known. Our heavens and our earth have passed away,—they are no more! There is sudden void! This is fearful extremity! Yet then the Promise does not fail us. We read it by the blaze of that universal conflagration. And yonder,—whither we are rapt,—there bends a firmament, there smiles an earth, whose arch is illumined with unexampled glories, whose field is dispread with unimaginable charms!

And can the sinner, the hater of Christ, the disbeliever of the gospel, think of these things without dismay? If he could keep possession of this present system until then, then all is lost. The world, the house of his idols, is consumed. All that he sought and loved has perished. Where lies his own escape? Where rises a refuge for him from this horrible tempest? Where is his ark that may surmount these billows of resistless flame? They light but his way to fiercer fires! Ere that fiery indignation shall burst upon these heavens and this earth,—Sinner! Scoffer! fly for pardon, acceptance, sanctification, to the Redeemer, before He shall become thy Judge,—to the Spirit, before He shall become thine Enemy and fight against thee!

It is to the Christian, not only a sweet prospect, it is an awful issue! What if—there is vile ingratitude in the most momentary doubt. We may know suspense. Hope may be deferred. But our hearts are assured. In this will we be confident. It is the word of the Supreme. It is the oath of the Eternal. The Strength of Israel will

not lie. God cannot deny himself. There is no sight by which to walk, there is no semblance on which to look. These things are not seen. These things are not. There shines not to us one point of those expected heavens,—there appears not one particle of that intended earth. But they shall be! Not more sure are their present images, than are those archetypes! We trust in Him who calleth things which be not as though they were! We are shut up to this faith, but it suffices,—it can want no support of the present and the external,—the absence of every aid is its best might,—its true and sublimest victory is when it despairs of all, save the Faithful Power of God! We shall not be ashamed! All may sink beneath us,—all may perish around us,—we may hear Nature's latest groans,—we may behold Creation's dying embers,—the trump of God may have ceased to sound,—"Nevertheless we, according to His Promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which dwelleth righteousness."

NOTES.

PAGE 125. *Note.*

"To me there is ample reason to believe that the Codex Alexandrinus originally read ΘC̄, God, in this place; but the stroke becoming *faint* by length of time and injudicious handling, of which the MS. in this place has had a large proportion, some person has supplied the place, most reprehensibly, with a *thick black line.* This has destroyed the evidence of this MS., as now it can neither be quoted *pro* or *con*, though it is very likely that the person who supplied the ink line, did it from a conscientious conviction that ΘC̄ was the original reading of this MS. I examined this MS. about thirty years ago, and this was the conviction that rested then on my mind. I have seen the MS. several times since, and have not changed my opinion."—*Rev. Dr. Adam Clarke's Commentary in loco.*

This MS. is of the Fifth Century, and is now in possession of the British Museum. It is commonly esteemed the oldest extant, bearing the note of Critical seniority, A. But that of the Vatican is older, and deserves this Alphabetical distinction.

There is in Woide's Examination of the Cordex Alexandrinus a curious paragraph concerning the opinions of Richard Porson on this disputed Text.

1 Tim. iii. 16. $\overline{\Theta C}$. —Circulo O digitis detrito admodum et exolescente biduum sese maceravit R. P. Pro virgula supra, ut solet, elegantissime deducta, linea crassa profecto ac rudis comparet, et vice diametri tenuis intra circulum venustissime depicti punctum pinguius et hodie flavescens exit; acie vero intentissima illud curiose perlustranti lucida tela diei adeo aberrare et omnia prorsus confundere cœperunt, ut oculis dolentibus sese quicquam, quod vellet, vigilantem vidisse somniaret. Longe aliter R. P. evenit; πᾶν ἐπ' ΑΛΑΘΕΙΑ' Αι πεπλασμένον ἐκ Διὸς ἔρνος· ille textum OCEΦANEPΩΘH a manu prima fuisse diserte scriptum certo pronunciavit. Cum $\overline{\Theta C}$ sæpius desit quam abundet, mihi

in mentem venit ΘC OC præ oculis librarium habuisse, et priorem incuria omisisse : de hoc ne verbum quidem R. P.; sed inter loca, quæ *vivida* quadam memoriæ *vi* confestim et quasi sponte depromta, ad Eur. Ph. 5.* non multo post enotabat, Suidam v. ἰσχύων citavit ; et deleto ἰσ. hunc articulum sequenti subjungendum monuit ; deinde pro ὅς maluit Θεὸς, vel Θεὸς ὁ sicut habent Scholiastes Soph. ad El. 698. et ipse Pindarus Pyth. ii. 91. Vide infra Θεός ; in priore loco Suidæ MS. Harl. vulgatam exhibet."

PAGE 158, *Ten Lines from the Top.*

A very just and beautiful Essay on this Text may be found in "The Remains of the late Rev. John Morell Mackenzie, A. M." His early fate is not needed to give interest to his posthumous writings. They are all the fruits of youth,—they were unintended for the public eye,—but there is a masterly power in them all. What would he have been? What must he have become? "Pauca quidem ingenii sui pignora reliquit, sed egregia sed admiranda."

PAGE 175, *Seven Lines from the Top.*

"Let us not for a moment blench from the mysteries of Revelation ; they are mysteries of godliness; and, however much they may surpass human reason, bear the distinct impress of a Divine hand. We rejoice that they are mysteries, so far from being ashamed of them on that account ; since the principal reason why they are, and must ever continue such, is derived from their elevation, from their unsearchable riches and undefinable grandeur."—*Robert Hall.*

To this admirable Writer may be well applied the language of Cicero in his Claris Oratoribus : "Et erat oratio cum incitata et vibrans, tum etiam accurata et polita." 95.

PAGE 178, *Top Line ; and* PAGE 187, *Eleven Lines from the Top.*

"The priesthood of Christ, and the tabernacle in the mount, were the originals : of the former of which, the Levitical priesthood was a type ; and of the latter, the tabernacle made by Moses was a copy. The doctrine of

* Aristoph. Pac 938. ὅσ' ἂν Θεὸς θέλῃ, Victorii Codex.

the Epistle to the Hebrews, then, plainly is that the legal sacrifices were *allusions* to the great and final atonement to be made by the blood of Christ; and *not that this was an allusion to those.*"—*Butler's Analogy, Part ii., Chap.* 5.

I felt peculiarly happy in incidentally meeting with this passage in so profound an authority. The value of the distinction cannot be exaggerated. A particular controversy early taught me the importance of insisting upon it. Otherwise the positive, the determining, character or meaning subsists in the type, and the Sacrifice of Christ is only left a contingent, figurative, accommodated, sense.

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